

# AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

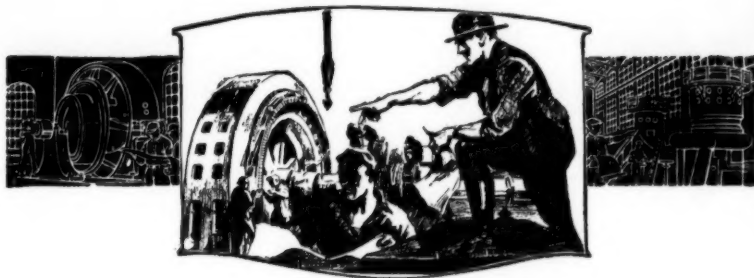
CT. 1921

20 CENTS



# ELECTRICITY

*The Short Cut To Big-Pay*



**Electrical Experts Earn  
\$3,500 to \$10,000 a Year**

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The "short-cut" to "Big-Pay" is training. The big field of today for the trained man is Electricity. Trained "Electrical Experts" earn \$70.00 to \$200.00 a week.

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Street Address.....

City.....State.....

Occupation or Business.....

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

October  
1921

# AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XLVIII  
No. 2

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Yearly Subscription, \$2.00

Single Copies, Twenty Cents

Monthly publication issued by Ainslee's Magazine Co., Seventh Avenue and Fifteenth Street, New York. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Secretary and Treasurer, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Copyright, 1921, by Ainslee's Magazine Co., New York. Copyright, 1921, by Ainslee's Magazine Co., Great Britain. All Rights Reserved. Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this Magazine either wholly or in part. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 11, 1912, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian subscription, \$2.50. Foreign \$2.75.

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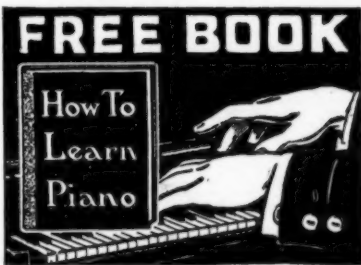
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By WARREN HARTLE



**H**ARTLE, you're all wrong. Take my advice and stay where you are."

"But, listen, Jim—" "Nothing doing. You can't convince me that you can learn how to sell. If you had a Selling personality, or if you had the 'gift of gab' it might be different. But you haven't. I don't want to discourage you, but you know yourself that you were never cut out to be a Salesman. You'd just be wasting your time trying to learn. It's a fool stunt, that's all."

Such was my running mate's answer when I told him that I intended to learn the Selling game. True, I didn't know the first thing about Selling, and it didn't seem as if I was cut out for it. Clerking in the railway mail service was far removed from selling goods, and I didn't blame him for trying to discourage me.

Yet I had heard of a new and easy method of learning Salesmanship that was accomplishing wonders. This amazing method disclosed the very secrets of Selling that were used by the most successful Salesmen in the country. Men who previously knew nothing about Selling were getting results that were actually astonishing.

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### Into the \$10,000 a Year Class

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**NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION**  
Dept. 4-R CHICAGO, ILL.

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**NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASS'N,**  
Dept. 4-R, Chicago, Ill.

Send me Free Proof that you can make me a Star Salesman and tell me how you will help me in a Selling job. Also list showing lines of business with openings for Salesmen. This does not obligate me in any way.

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*This is an actual photograph  
of Roscoe Arbuckle's hand  
holding an OMAR.*

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OmarOmar *is* **Aroma**  
**Aroma** makes a cigarette;  
They've told you that for years  
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Thirteen kinds of choice Turkish and  
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are blended to give Omar its delicate  
and distinctive **Aroma**.

*They always go together—*

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Mocha and Java

*and*

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Recommended by  
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# AINSLIE'S

VOL. XLVIII.

OCTOBER, 1921.

No. 2.



## Fantaisie Amoureuse

By

Josephine A. Meyer

Author of "The Meddlesome Dead,"  
"Seven Years," etc.

### CHAPTER I.

**A** STRANGE, gray sky hung above the heavily plowing steamer. A land sky, thought Cicely as she gazed up into it, and her throat tightened with excitement. Only an hour or two more and then—New York!

The decks were deserted. People were below packing, seeking stewards to tip, and meeting one another in their luggage-littered staterooms to exchange addresses which they were never likely to use. Steamship intimacies were coming to a close and dying hard, as usual. Cicely smiled to herself and thought of her promise to keep in touch with Mrs. Pierce who had been so kind and even motherly, although she was scarcely five years Cicely's senior. She had confessed her age in her genial loquacity. "Forty-four, my dear," she had even boasted. Cicely had felt a little deceitful in allowing her to believe she was so much younger when Mrs. Pierce so sympathetically pitied her young widowhood. If she really looked only thirty—

1—Ains.

Ah, but she wanted youth! What was coming to her now was rebirth, and one cannot be born old. She looked through the dull-blue atmosphere over the shallowing gray of the waters to that dim, ribbonary blur which they had told her was distant land. She tried to project herself through time and space to know what lay awaiting her over there, an hour hence.

She was a handsome woman, tall and very straight and slim. She held her small head high, and she so arranged her glossy dark-brown hair that the gray streak in it was invisible, though when it was blown into view by disrespectful deck winds, it merely enhanced the slate color of her steady, black-fringed eyes.

"You are English," Mrs. Pierce had said to her the first day, when they had found their deck chairs side by side.

"My parents were. I was born in America," Cicely had replied. Her appearance, no less than her name, proclaimed her origin. She had been Cicely Oakworth until she had married

James Bannard. Mrs. Pierce had contrived to discover her maiden name and had exclaimed in admiration over it, then narrowed her eyes in the effort of one trying to remember what it connoted.

"I'm sure I've met you. Before you were married. Who presented you, my dear?" she asked.

"I never was presented."

"Really? Come, there is some joke." Mrs. Pierce eyed her with frank disbelief.

"Not as you mean—socially," explained Cicely, smiling.

"But I could swear I've heard your name."

For a moment Cicely was tempted to tell her that she had seen it several times on the boardings of concert halls and on their programs fifteen years ago, but she was tempted even more to maintain her youth and remain incognito.

"I did not go into society," she said noncommittally.

"My dear, why not?" The astonishment in Mrs. Pierce's tone made the question a compliment rather than an impertinence.

"Mr. Bannard was ill for many years."

"And you married very young, of course? Was he any relation to the Iron Works Bannards?"

"Yes. They are all plain people. So were mine. I did not marry so very young, but I never cared about going out much. I'm afraid I took advantage of Mr. Bannard's ill health to become even more of a recluse," explained Cicely.

"Ah, but that was wrong! And now you are in mourning, with another excuse to deprive society of your charming self. - But you will come to see me, won't you?"

And Cicely had promised.

Cicely was thinking of this conversation when she looked up to see Mrs.

Pierce standing in the hatchway. Her comfortable steamer trappings had given away to a neat tailored suit and a smart hat and veil which made her look infinitely younger. Her face lightened when she saw Cicely and she came toward her cheerfully.

"I never fail to get excited at this stage of the trip," she said, and an electrical quiver in her voice bore her out. "I do believe I have more heart than I am conscious of. I find myself thinking sentimentally of Brook, the old dear! And the youngsters. Anne will be sure to be down to see what I have brought in her trousseau." She stopped her chatter suddenly, and her kind brown eyes dwelt with sympathetic regret on Cicely's inattentive profile, on which she perceived a strange expression which was part eagerness and part fear. "What a brute I am!" she reproved herself. "But there'll be some one to meet you, of course."

Cicely flushed unaccountably.

"I don't know. My lawyer, perhaps. I merely cabled what steamer I was taking."

"Is he a family friend?"

"He was quite close to Mr. Bannard."

"But you—you, yourself?"

"Why, no; I can't count him a personal friend. His being at the dock to meet me will be the act of professional kindness," answered Cicely, amused.

"Forgive me, dear, but is there no one? I can't help thinking how uneven it is. If I could divide with you! Brook is as impetuous as I am. When we like people we share our likes as a rule, and our all with our likes. I have a husband and three children you may share with me, besides sisters, aunts, and a bachelor uncle, a delightful old devil who might amuse you. Take your pick." She grew serious. "Come home with me."

"You dear!" Cicely's eyes filled with

a suddenness that astonished her, but she shook her head. "No, no. My house will be open. The housekeeper is there and it is home. The sooner I take up life the better. Besides, doubtless Mr. Hood, my lawyer, has let friends know about my return and they may call to-night."

"Yes, of course." Mrs. Pierce looked vague. She was evidently wondering why some of those friends would not be at the dock, considering the circumstances. Cicely's sensitive understanding penetrated her silence.

"I'm not altogether sure they won't be down with Mr. Hood," she said, faltering. "At least—one——"

"There is some one special?"

"I was thinking of a friend, a protégé of Mr. Bannard's. A young musician who, next to Mr. Hood, would be most interested in my poor husband's death." She looked back clearly into Mrs. Pierce's eyes, wondering at her own calm voice and casual manner. As though all happiness, all life were not depending upon this one slim hope—that he would be there.

"A musician? I am a frequenter of concerts. Would I have heard of him?"

"Perhaps. I believe he has made great progress in America since we last saw him five years ago. Adrian Valdebar, a pianist."

"Oh, yes, surely! I remember him distinctly! And he is a protégé of yours? Well, now that is delightful! Every one quite raves about him. Last year he was lionized and, my dear, he stood it remarkably well. Such a young man, a boy really. And good looking. I do hope he will be at the dock and perhaps you would introduce us. Ellen, my younger girl who is musical, would not miss a single concert at which he played. I believe she wrote me that she had met him, or a friend of hers had. He was the rage in New York last winter."

"Was he really?" Cicely moistened her dry lips and kept her gaze on the darkening strip of land on the horizon.

"Don't you know? Hasn't he written?"

"My husband was forced to break off all his correspondence in the last year or so. And we were never sure of an address. We traveled so much, and so vainly, from place to place. In the end it cut us off completely."

"I see. And these young people one aids! I know how it is from others. Give them a start and they run away from you."

"Why not?" murmured Cicely.

"It's downright ungrateful."

"But who wants gratitude?"

"My dear!"

"It is so strained and dutiful. One wants a comrade, not a vassal."

"A comrade? Why the disparity in age?" said Mrs. Pierce.

"Is it so great?" protested Cicely, hurt.

"You once said, didn't you, that your husband was past sixty? And Valdebar even now cannot be thirty," reckoned Mrs. Pierce in surprise.

"Yes, that is true. I am stupid." Cicely looked confused.

"No," soothed Mrs. Pierce tenderly.

"You are more than forgivable for the devotion that makes him seem so close to you in age."

"Who?" involuntarily asked Cicely.

"You mean Mr. Bannard, of course," she added hastily.

"Surely!"

"Yes, surely. We were chums."

"But he is even younger than you?"

"Adrian Valdebar? Yes."

"That widens the disparity."

"What does it matter? We were fond of him. He might have been our son." Cicely crushed her hands together and then relaxed. "We had no children. He might have been my—our future. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes!" agreed Mrs. Pierce

quickly and a little blankly. "You mean his career. Mr. Barnard was musical?"

"To some extent."

"And you?"

"I play a little."

"That's it. It's music that your name reminds me of. Your own name, Oakworth. Were there musicians in your family?"

"My father composed a little. He had great hopes of me"—she admitted that much—"but then I met Mr. Barnard. We women!"

"Giving up our careers for our men?" asked Mrs. Pierce banteringly.

"Yes," said Cicely. But she thought, "Changing our careers, rather. I became a nurse." Well, that was past and the bitterness was grown faint already. Adrian Valdebar was making good.

Suddenly the second officer appeared, looked at them, smiled, and saluted respectfully.

"You can see the Statue of Liberty for'a'd," he announced, as though this were his own special triumph. They thanked him and moved forward to look, and Cicely was conscious of a sharp pang, as hope and dread struggled against each other in her heart.

## CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Pierce pointed them out excitedly, one by one, as she was able to recognize them with the approach of the steamer into its dock. And when the boat was being moored she was able to call to them.

"That's Anne with the velvet hat and henna feather. See? Next to that pretty light-haired girl. I don't know who she can be. My husband is just back of them. Tell me, does he impress you as a noticeably fat man? Brook!" she waved at him frantically, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, he'd never forgive me for discussing his figure with a stranger, but it's really the only

way to find out! Every one who knows him likes him well enough to lie about it. Is he fat? My dear, dear old Brook!"

"He's portly," compromised Cicely, and her companion laughed hysterically.

"How tactful and damning! If he could hear you! But I'll never tell him, I promise."

"Maybe I am looking at the wrong man," repented Cicely.

"No, you're not. That's the trouble. He is portly; more than portly, poor dear. I think he has put on flesh since I've been away. The girls are so careless with him and cannot outgrow their respect for his wishes. Where is Ellen? Oh, my dear! My darling! They've got George down from school to meet me! My Georgie! That's Ellen with him. No, over there in the brown suit with that big boy. That's George, my baby. Heavens, how they grow in a year! He's at school and I didn't expect him. Georgie! Georgie!"

On the dock they called the boy's attention to her, and he lifted his round, little, spectacled face, puzzled, shy, and resentful till he caught sight of her. The change in his expression was clearly visible even at that distance—a wonderful flooding of the blank little countenance with eager love and joy.

Until now Cicely had observed her companion's excitement with no stronger emotion than pleasure in her delight and wonder at her vitality, but something in the child's recognition of his mother cut through her with the full perception of her own loneliness. In a flash she visualized herself, a pitiable figure of a middle-aged widow, childless and *passée*. Again her desperate eyes swept the huddled faces of the crowds below, seeking the one she had instinctively guessed would not be there, and its absence made the present moment almost intolerable.



Some one was waving to her. A rubicund man, with his hat flaunting ridiculously in his ungainly hand, his hair all the grayer against his rosy skin, was grinning at her industriously. She was glad and a bit astonished at the warmth of her own response to the sight of this one, familiar face, and she waved back with a spurt of enthusiasm.

"I have found some one," she told Mrs. Pierce smilingly. "See that awkward fellow with the red face and gray hair? He is an old-time friend who knew my parents, a Swiss, Anton Perregaux. He's a sort of concert manager, agent for aspiring musicians and what not. A kindly, ineffectual sort of person. I wonder whom he has come to meet. That is Mr. Hood next to him." The new discovery set her to scrutinizing the crowds again, her heart leaping with hope only to sink with further disappointment.

By now Mrs. Pierce was exchanging shouted messages with her little group, glad, silly, obvious remarks on appearances or health. She seemed to have forgotten Cicely, but she turned to her, at last, and Cicely was strangely moved to see tears flowing unheeded down the older woman's face.

"These returns! They are worth the partings that must bring them about and yet they make us want to make them impossible. How could I have left my dear old Brook, my poor, sweet babies for so long? My goodness, there are Uncle Alec and John!"

There seemed to be no end to the people who had come to see Mrs. Pierce return.

Confusion followed the actual landing, and in it they were separated. Up till the last moment, when her two men were shaking hands with her, Cicely's eyes were roving and her ears alert for some testimony that her dearest wish was to be fulfilled.

"No, of course; not here in all this noise and publicity. He will be at

the house," she told herself limply, and then she became acutely aware of the light in Anton Perregaux's round, blue eyes, and she was startled by their unexpected youthfulness. He was radiant. She found herself wondering. Was he really so glad of her return and had she in truth one friend who had really missed her?

"But you mustn't waste your time with me," she said suddenly, withdrawing her hand from his. "Your friends will be looking for you and will not thank me for detaining you."

"Who?" he asked, puzzled.

"The people you have come to meet."

"I have found her."

"Me?" And as he nodded happily, she glanced inquiringly up at Hood, the tall, handsome, young lawyer whose dignity was enhanced by a sort of lofty interest in the turmoil of reunion that went on about him.

"That is true. Mr. Perregaux came with me," he affirmed, with a quick, shallow smile—shallow, Cicely noted, by contrast with the deep geniality and delight on Perregaux's face.

"How sweet of you," she said, and her sentence ended in a weary little sigh. Perregaux looked at her keenly.

"But I must be off now," he said hastily. "You have much business. I'll come to see you to-night, unless you will be too tired."

"No, but don't run away," she begged half-heartedly. He merely shook his head, raised his hat, grinned again, with a drawn look about his kindly temples, and left her.

With Mr. Hood's help she attended to the inspection of her luggage. She had brought very little that was usable, and the customs officer was rather impressed by her mourning apparel, her distinguished companion, and her detached, uninterested manner. He barely troubled to go over her things, and they were soon ready to start.

As they passed down the long dock

to her maid, waiting beside a taxi, she bowed right and left to the various steamer acquaintances gathered patiently in sections marked by their letters. She saw Mrs. Pierce surrounded by a gay and chattering contingent of relatives, mostly young. Her distant nod apparently did not satisfy that garrulous, kind-hearted woman, who, on catching sight of her, crooked her hand through the arm of the "portly" man she had designated as her husband and drew him away from the others in order to encounter Cicely as she passed on her way off the dock.

"Get me an officer; I'll be right back. Come, Brook!" she called, and added something to her husband which Cicely could not hear, evidently a preliminary introduction, for his eyes were focused with ingenuous interest upon the woman to whom she was about to present him.

"This is my husband, Mrs. Bannard. Brook, you used to know James Bannard, didn't you? The Iron Works Bannards?" she explained.

"I knew of him," said Mr. Pierce. Then Hood was presented, and the two men tried to match acquaintances in business while the women arranged a future meeting.

"You must come, as informally as you wish, and meet all my jolly youngsters," exclaimed Mrs. Pierce. "It's what you need, even if at first you imagine you don't want it. Hear that! Doesn't that do your heart good?" she added, as a burst of merry, well-bred laughter issued from the group she had left and a sweet, clear voice exclaimed:

"Why, Gloria Sanfred, how can you accuse me?"

Cicely smiled steadily at Mrs. Pierce. She was afraid to glance in the direction of this light-hearted gathering lest bitter envy should show in her face.

"I need covet no one's happiness," she told herself, but without conviction.

She was oppressed with the knowledge that something had gone amiss.

"I shall come, really," she assured Mrs. Pierce. They had exchanged cards and telephone numbers and there was no more to say, yet Mrs. Pierce seemed loath to let her go.

"Mother," called George Pierce, evidently coached by one of his sisters, "we've got a policeman."

A gale of laughter greeted his mistake and in it Mrs. Pierce made her final adieu. Cicely and the lawyer got into the taxi.

"You'll want a town car," said Hood as they settled themselves. "I've been on the lookout for one and have decided on several, subject to your approval. And Harry Gordon, who is going to the Orient, will bequeath you his chauffeur for the winter."

He continued in the same vein, planning for her and discussing some minor problems of management and finance. She noticed that he spoke fluently, like one a little afraid to stop. And so they soon reached her Gramercy Park house.

She had forgotten what she was expecting to await her there till her housekeeper opened the door to her, with a greeting that combined respectful joy and sorrow.

"Is any one here?" she asked.

"No, Mrs. Bannard. But there are some flowers for you."

"Ah, where are they?"

"I put them in your room, ma'am."

"And you'll want to go up and rest," suggested Hood. "I'll leave you and come in to see you some time tomorrow."

"Yes. Very well. Do."

Suddenly she caught her lower lip in her teeth. Under the soft, black folds of her veil, her face grew deadly white and desperately helpless. Its expression penetrated through the blind reserve of the worldly man before her.



though he could only misinterpret it. He took her hand firmly and kindly.

"I have purposely refrained from asking you any details to-day," he said gently in his deep and pleasant voice. "I need not, I hope, tell you it is not lack of interest, but a perhaps awkward attempt at consideration for your feelings."

"I understand."

"If you—could—speak of it."

She wondered if it were villainy to lay her agitation completely to her loss. Her hesitation prevented the decision. Hood stroked her hand sympathetically. "Never mind, never mind," he soothed.

"He was ill a long time, but death is always a shock," she heard herself mutter.

"I fear you spent yourself in your loving care of him," he went on. "Yet that must be your consolation."

"It is." She drew away her hand. Once more she looked swiftly about the familiar hall, the hangings to the drawing-room, the mahogany of the stair rail, the wall paper that looked so incredibly fresh after five years. The irrevocability of the passing of James Bannard came to her anew and brought her a sense of freedom and relief. Hope rose in her again in spite of the emptiness of the house. She wanted to go to her room to see the card on the flowers the housekeeper had left there.

"Good-by," said Hood, sensing his dismissal.

"Good-by." She watched him turn to the door; then a sudden impulse gave her the voice to detain him. "You—you are coming back to-night?" she asked lamely.

"Surely, if you wish me to. I thought we had decided upon to-morrow," he hesitated.

"Yes, yes. It was Anton Perregaux who said he would come to-night. Forgive me for being so confused. How

did he happen to know, by the way, that I was coming in to-day?"

"He telephoned me when he first heard of—of your—your bereavement—oh, about four months ago. Then he kept in touch with me every week or so till I knew what steamer you were taking. He's a good friend."

"Yes. He is. Did—did any one else phone?"

"Several persons, at various times."

"Some day you must tell me about them." She tried to go on upstairs, but her heart bade her question further. "Tell me, did, by any chance, Adrian Valdebar—"

"Valdebar? No, I don't think so." He was so inconsequential about it!

"Oh! Well, you see, I asked because—he was a sort of ward of Mr. Bannard's. He should have been especially interested, one would suppose—" She broke off, trembling a little.

"Well," smiled Hood as he opened the door, "we must forgive a young man in love, I suppose, if he reserves all his thoughtfulness for his fiancée."

### CHAPTER III.

She heard herself laugh musically and meaninglessly; she heard herself lightly echo his parting "good-by"; she heard the door shut after him. Then from nowhere in particular, Mrs. Linsley, the housekeeper, appeared and, by a sort of conversational reflex, Cicely answered laconically, but correctly and sanely, the questions dictated by the woman's commiserating curiosity concerning James Bannard's last days.

Within Cicely's brain, clamoring above the sound of her spoken words, were the insults she hurled at herself for her stupidity in letting Hood go like that, with no further explanation. "Fiancée"—what fiancée? Adrian in love—in love with some one else?

Her desire to read the card on the

flowers in her room became so intense as to be painful. She played again upon the theme of her fatigue.

"I am going to lie down in my room for an hour. Then come up to me and we'll arrange household matters," she said wanly.

Mrs. Linsley insisted on accompanying her upstairs. She was a gray-haired woman who had been with the Bannards all their married life. She was, as a rule, undemonstrative, though loyal, interested, but uninquisitive. It was natural that she would want to know about the death, the funeral in Italy where he had wanted to be buried, the convent-bred nurses, and the famous Austrian doctor. She drank in the details with enveloping eyes and noddings and shakings of her head that would have been humorous had they not been backed up by such genuine emotion.

"These are the flowers, Mrs. Bannard." She brought them over, glorious sunset roses. Adrian had always sent her sunset roses; he knew they were her favorites. She felt she did not need the card Mrs. Linsley held out to her. On it was scrawled.

To the return of Cicely Oakworth. A. P.

"Antón Perregaux," she murmured. "How thoughtful!" Yes, he, too, knew her taste in roses. But now they had lost their beauty. The tears of desolation welled in her eyes, blurring them mercifully.

Her maid was busy unpacking so she sent her to the laundry to press out the trunk-crushed dresses. Mrs. Linsley tucked her comfortably upon the chaise longue and, after an interminable interval of more kindly small talk, withdrew. So at last Cicely was alone and able to unburden her heavy heart.

But the tears did not come. She sobbed a bit dryly and hysterically; then lay gazing at the ceiling, trying to piece together the rent garment of her life.

"What does it mean?" she whispered

to herself feverishly. "First I must find out what it means. Maybe it is not true. People say such hateful things in jest, people who cannot know."

She wanted to see and speak to Adrian herself. Telephone. She sat up swiftly. But she did not know his number or where he lived. The only address that she had was one he had promised her five years ago that he would change so that she might not be tempted to write to him.

Five years! Oh, fool that she was to believe that love was able to live so long in a man, without anything to feed on except dim hope. What good had her sacrifice to James Bannard done? Was he any less dead to-day? Suppose her leaving him five years ago to seek her happiness with Adrian had driven the sick man to an earlier grave? Then he would have been saved just so many days of useless suffering, and she would have been saved the precious years between youth and middle age. Honor? To her, now, it seemed merely a word of which to taste and grow mad. Reputation? That was the right to mix with Mrs. Pierce and her ilk, to drink the sugar-water imitation of life with the elaborate, empty ceremony that was supposed to give it savor.

"Adrian, Adrian!" she cried in smothered tones. "Can you really have forgotten? It is only five years, after all. Surely you can explain. Oh, dear God, let the telephone ring, and let it be Adrian!"

The telephone rang!

Her hand could scarcely reach out to take down the receiver; her voice was husky and barely audible.

There was a woman on the other end. "This is Mrs. Pierce," said that lady. "I only wanted to see if you had got home all right and if there is anything at all that I can do for you."

"No—no, thanks."

After she had put down the telephone

Cicely discovered she could at last cry, furiously and tempestuously, at the cruelty of the fate that thus tortured her. It relieved and exhausted her, and she fell asleep.

When Anton Perregaux came that night he found her serene in her hopelessness.

"You are rested?" he asked, greeting her.

"Did I look so altered for the worse when you first saw me?"

"Ah, no, Cicely, you must not talk like that. You are a beautiful woman." He said it with so much simplicity that it did not sound strange, nor even especially complimentary.

"Say rather, 'distinguished old lady,'" she corrected, motioning to her hair. She had not attempted to hide the gray streak to-night. In a fury of self-discipline she had made the most of it.

Perregaux looked at it uncomfortably a moment and flushed.

"You must remedy that," he said.

"Dye it?" She raised her brows humorously.

"It is undeserved and bad for you. Cicely, my child, you have life before you, now. You must not handicap yourself as you start on your career."

"As I—what?" To her amazement a warm glow had flooded through her at his words, like the glow of returning life. But her very perception of this put an end to it. "Dear Anton," she said wearily, "youth is a matter of years, not words."

"Yes, I would say that, too. In years you are still young. It remains for you to know it. You must not be lazy, my friend. Youth has duties."

"You must not speak to me that way, to-night," she said with a little gasp. "I am tired," she added in excuse. "Tell me about yourself. What have you done since I've been away?"

"The same as always. Watched artists grow."

"Adrian Valdebar, our little Adrian?" she said with elaborate carelessness. She had not expected it would be so easy to bring the conversation to this point. "A first magnitude star, I hear."

"Not first; no. But he has talent and promise. He is far too popular, poor lad."

"You Puritan!"

"He has known no hardship."

"And now he is going to marry."

"Then you know?" he asked curiously. "Yes; that, too, is bad."

"Marriage?"

"He should have chosen better."

"She"—Cicely bit her lips—"she is not one you would have picked for him?"

"An artist should marry an artist."

"Then—she—is not?"

"She is a society butterfly. A spoiled child."

"Not really?" She was experiencing that drowsy numbness which comes with excessive pain.

"Has he not written that, too?"

"He did not write. I learned it through Mr. Hood. I have been a bad correspondent with every one—not only you—all these years. You see, I have much to catch up with."

"So?" His eyebrows contracted and his lips quivered as he turned his head away. Had he wanted her to write, so much?

"How—how did they meet?"

"Adrian? At one of his concerts where she fell in love with him. All the women do. But she has so much money it will buy her anything she wants."

"Don't, Anton."

"That hurts you? Why? You have money now, too. Mind, Cicely, my child, that you choose to buy with it something that will really bring you happiness," he warned cryptically.

"Has she no parents?"

"Yes. They give her everything."

They were glad to give her even Adrian Valdebar."

"They encouraged the match?"

"She needs no encouragement to action. They gracefully approved after she had decided."

"Is she musical?"

"She plays so well every one asks, 'Why are you not on the concert stage, yourself?' That is, every one in her set."

"I see. And she is pretty?"

"Beautiful. Famous for it."

The words stabbed Cicely, but she covered her flinching with rapid questions.

"Tall? Dark? Fair? A goddess, or a gamine?"

"Tall and lovely. Fair and subtle."

"And young?"

"Nineteen or twenty. How old is he? Much older, I think."

"For a man that is only to his advantage," said Cicely. "He is thirty. What is her name?"

"A pretty name, Gloria Sanfred."

She sat bolt upright; then laughed softly.

"She was at the dock. I heard her name and did not look to see what she was like. She was at the dock, and he was not."

"Must engaged people, then, never leave each other's side?" he asked densely. "You wish to tire them out before marriage?"

"She came with the Pierces. She must know them well. Gloria Sanfred. I must write and congratulate Adrian. Will you give me his address? And the telephone number, in case——"

She rose and walked about restlessly as he complied. Once she glanced at him as he bent over the card, writing so precisely, peering through his pince-nez, assumed for the operation, his gray hair shining silver in the lamplight. How safely aloof he was from all passion and turmoil! Age has recompense. Yet he was not old, not much past fifty.

For the first time she was rather glad she was barely a dozen years younger, herself, so deeply did her hurt soul crave peace. Could she ever be old enough, she wondered, not to mind Adrian marrying a young, beautiful, rich, spoiled girl?

"She is very rich, Anton?"

"Yes. Here; I am not sure of his telephone number, but this is his club."

"I might have known he belonged there! Anton, is he marrying her for money? Has he been in need?"

She shook her own head even as he said "No." She was sorry for the suspicion, yet sorrier when it was denied.

"No," repeated Anton. "Perhaps it attracted him like a flashing light or a waving banner. But he is in love. He would not sell himself."

She placed her hand over his.

"Kind old Anton," she said brokenly.

He moved away from her quickly.

"What a brute am I!" he exclaimed gruffly. "I have kept you up when, long ago, you should have been in bed. I'll go now. Good-night."

"Wait. Don't go yet. I have so much to ask."

"To-morrow you may be sorry you have asked."

She stared at him, breathing heavily.

"You know, Anton?"

"I know nothing. It is best I continue to know nothing. Good-night, Cicely."

"Perhaps you are right. But please, one more question. When—when—is—are they to be—to be married?" Her voice was steady.

"I do not know. They have made public their engagement since a month."

"Then it will be soon."

"Doubtless." He paused, then added abruptly: "You wear mourning, Cicely."

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded, startled.

"I wondered," he said quietly, "do you mourn so formally in all things?" He motioned toward the piano. "My child, I beg you, do not turn your face from your most faithful friend."

The next moment he was gone, and she turned slowly from the curtained doorway to look, as though for the first, at her "most faithful friend." All pianos must speak to her in a beloved voice, in Adrian's voice.

She moved toward it mechanically, and, sitting down before it, opened it, with an undefined apprehension. Her fingers sought the keys, but it was some time before she could gather the strength to press them into sound. The very first chord unnerved her completely. She rose quickly and backed away, shaking in every limb. It was as if she had beheld a corpse move or heard it speak.

"My most faithful friend," she whispered to herself. "My most faithful friend," she repeated hysterically. She began to laugh and was unable to stop herself. "Dead, dead, too," she kept saying over and over, and each time it seemed more tragically ridiculous. She realized the servants might hear her and be outraged by her behavior. That thought, too, was shockingly amusing. She buried her face in the sofa cushions and tears streamed down her cheeks.

A few minutes later the sympathetic Mrs. Linsley found her thus and bundled her up to bed.

#### CHAPTER IV.

He came to tea two days later. Her note had said, "Come early—say four o'clock, so we can talk." It was nearly five when the bell rang, but she forgot the long, disquieting wait when he stood there, as of old, in the doorway of the upstairs library, giving the lie to the grief the years had brought her.

He was not very tall, but he stood

well, with the poise of one used to facing many eyes. It was a dull day and five o'clock saw the room almost the same color as full evening, dark outside the windows, with the soft glow of shaded lamps about the wide and somberly furnished room. The subdued illumination had its part in making him seem the same Adrian Valdebar she had sent away from her with such anguish, but still with such living hope. She envied that other Cicely's tragedy, contrasting it with the cruel comedy of the present moment.

He, who had sworn never to forget, had forgotten. He, whose heart had been so crushed, was rejoicing in its vitality, for when he neared the light and she beheld his eyes, she saw that he was not embarrassed by a single memory.

"Cicely!" he exclaimed, all smiles. He hesitated a minute only, then took her in his arms and kissed her upon the mouth.

As she pulled herself away from him, her ears drummed and her heart was thumping madly. But her dominant emotion was amazement. She had received his kiss coldly. And he had not been aware of it. She became filled with a strange satisfaction. "I have become another woman. I am old. It has come. Oh, the relief!" she thought. "I am no longer able to love." She was not apathetic, but conscious for the moment of an interest in herself greater than her interest in him.

She smiled upon him radiantly.

"Adrian," she scolded brightly. "Don't pretend you are glad to see me. I had to send for you." Within her, her heart whispered, "You are even joking about it!" And she rejoiced in the cessation of pain.

"But I didn't know you were back. How could I? Why didn't you tell me?" The warm, full tones of his voice made her a little uneasy. His eyes traveled swiftly over her soft, dull-black dress, up to her hair with its



faded streak, now deftly inconspicuous. "I say, Cicely, you haven't altered a bit!"

She heard the sharp breath hiss through her nostrils. It was an audible gasp. She wondered if he had noticed it and whether he could guess it had been caused by the stab of his careless words.

"No—no. I am the same." To her overwrought sensibility that sounded as if she were accusing him of—of that of which he was guilty. She covered it quickly. "You, too, Adrian. Perhaps, after all, five years is not as long as it seems."

"You've had a bad time," he commiserated. "Poor old Jim! I suppose it was a happy release."

This was Adrian, talking; that gaunt, white-faced boy who had been so passionately heartless in his cry: "Why doesn't he die? Can't he see he's in our way? Can't we make him see?"

She clenched her hands under the folds of her dress. They were sitting together on the broad, deep-cushioned sofa. A reading lamp beside him brought out his features clearly now; the upward sweep of his thick eyelashes, the sensitive curve of his delicate mouth, his musician's mouth, with its short, curling upper lip under the long, narrow nose. In the old days she had seen in him a likeness to Byron, and she had been wont to twit him about it because it was a feminine type. His face had lost some of its fineness of molding and texture, but its increased masculinity was more attractive. He noticed her scrutiny and received it undisturbed. That, too, was a new characteristic, that composure. Success and self-confidence lay behind it, and perhaps the conquest of Gloria Sanfred.

With impetuous courage she brought up the subject of his impending marriage.

"You are engaged?" she said, plunging.

A warm glow suffused his face, but it was not a guilty flush. He seemed to grow mature under it, rather than younger, as would have been the case had he been ashamed. He bent toward her, searching her face with eyes wide and honest, curious, but not fearful.

"Yes, dear. Are you surprised?"

"No," she answered faintly. She thought to herself: "There is some truth in that. I *knew*."

"I hope you will get to love her, too." He placed his hand over hers. "Once we were mighty close, dear, you and I. I've told her about you."

"Me," she repeated with dry throat, and it took every drop of will power she could summon to keep her from pulling her hand away.

"She knows it is due to your nobility that I am able to tell her everything without giving pain to any one."

"What—what is her name?" All vestige of quiet was gone from her now, forever. Cicely closed her eyes with that desire we all share to shut out the world and cower back in a corner of our brain when we suffer excruciating physical pain. It was an effort to talk and her voice was breathless.

"Gloria"—he tasted its rich music lovingly—"Gloria Sanfred."

How he adored every syllable! Once he had said "Cicely Oakworth" in those same accents. She became unbearably aware of his hand still pressing upon hers, his hand with its long, slim fingers and perfect nails. She realized that every muscle in her body was taut in the effort to suppress a nervous chill.

"A pretty name," she said calmly. "She is pretty, too?"

"She is beautiful."

"And young?"

"In years, but her understanding is so broad and keen——"

"Ah, and a musician, too?"

"She plays marvelously, Cicely. Almost as well as you do."

Before she could prevent herself she snatched away her hand with an inarticulate cry of pain.

"Cicely! What did I do? I hurt you! What a brute I am to forget the strength of my fingers!" He was immediately alarmed and contrite. "Once I bruised Gloria's dear hand like that. Ever since I've tried so hard to be careful, but I forget."

"Yes," she said in a low voice, "you must be careful."

"Let me kiss it better, dear!" He reached out to take her fingers again, but she rose quickly.

"Don't be silly." She tried to laugh, and covered her retreat by ringing the bell. "They ought to have brought tea," she added.

He had risen when she got up and, turning now, she saw a strange look upon his face.

"Cicely," he began uncertainly, and stopped.

"Yes?" she asked lightly. Her tone seemed to relieve him although he continued to gaze at her intently.

"Cicely—you"—he paused—"you are glad—of—my—my happiness?"

"Adrian! Can you doubt it?"

"Gloria said once she could not see how you could help being jealous of her. But I remembered you as you really were. Oh, love has brought me so much, dear!" he went on. "All you said it would when you so wisely told me, five years ago, that I was yet to learn."

"You see, I was right." Her bravery sounded brittle to her.

"Yes. And yet, Cicely, no one can be to me what you have been."

"Thank you, dear." She averted her face.

"I love you, Cicely. I've loved you unabatedly and without change, ever since I first knew you."

"Don't say that, Adrian, or I shall think you know you are lying!" cried Cicely sharply, her hands on her ears.

"What do you mean?" he asked, astonished.

He didn't know! Nor could she tell him. It would have seemed so cheap. On the tip of her tongue trembled the question that would have enlightened him: "If Anton Perregaux was at the dock to meet me, can you excuse your not knowing of my coming, of not being there to greet me, if you have not changed?" Her pride shrank from the form of a reproach.

"Tea, at last!" she exclaimed in relief, as there was a knock on the door and the maid entered with the tea wagon. "See, I have not forgotten your taste for fruit cake and muffins. I hope you haven't changed in that."

"But I want you to understand me, Cicely, dear," he began again in a distressed voice, when the servant had withdrawn. "My love for you persists unaltered. It is merely that now I have grown to see it was not the love of a man for his wife."

"But for his mother? Ah, you respect my gray hair! Maybe you forget the oldest among them is barely five years old. Two lumps and no cream for you. I flatter you by my memory of your preferences. That is the failing of good mothers."

"Do not mock at it, Cicely, dear. It was maternal and filial love, after all, wasn't it? You loved me because you could help me. You told me that yourself. It was you who made me see."

"No, Adrian, it was not I."

"Who, then?"

"Gloria Sanfred."

"She?" He smiled with lowered head. Then, with quick confidentiality, "No, hardly she," he said.

"Yes, dear, yes," persisted Cicely mysteriously.

"To convince you I must tell you, though it will make you laugh. It is



so foolish of her, but she is jealous of you."

The bitterness was there despite the sweetness. Cicely dwelt unhappily on "it will make you laugh," but she smiled as if it amused her, nor did he notice the superficiality of her mirth.

"But if she should see me!"

"She will see you as soon as you permit. May I bring her to-morrow? The next day? When?"

"To dispel her fears and set her mind at rest as soon as possible?"

"Cicely!" Again came his long, puzzled look. "What is it? Is—is—it—is it anything I have done?"

"Is what?" she asked evasively, smiling.

"I've given you pain," he said bluntly.

"Do you forget I joke?"

"Dear, you—you seem distant."

"Distant? Oh, no!" Distance, she thought, could be created between two people by the withdrawal of either one. It was not she who had moved. She could not let him think so. She could not accuse him. She could only deny the separation.

"It is not cynicism. You have suffered."

"Not that, either. Gayety, perhaps, that we see each other again after so long. Maybe, an attempt to—to temper my emotion with lightness. Dear, dear boy. Yes, you must bring your *carissima* soon."

"You do want to see her?" he asked eagerly.

"Indeed, indeed yes," she declared fervently. Then she smiled. "If only to convince her she has no need to be jealous of—of your mother."

To her amazement she beheld tears in his eyes.

"Cicely!" he exclaimed. "I had no right to doubt you even for a moment. You are the finest woman in the world, the gentlest, the wisest! You are the sort that makes us idealists and gives to us such daughters as Gloria. She

might indeed be your daughter; she is only nineteen. But you will see how quickly and completely she understands you and joins me worshipping you."

"So now you have made me a saint?" asked Cicely wryly.

"You have always been a saint to me," he answered soberly.

For a moment she did not answer and her face hardened.

"That," she thought, "was my calamitous mistake." But she suppressed the desire to say it aloud, and turned the conversation into a lighter vein.

## CHAPTER V.

After he had gone, Cicely sat for a long time before the fire, wondering at the strange feeling she had that his visit had not really happened. It was not Adrian Valdebar she had seen. It was a stranger, resembling him somewhat, a pleasant, new acquaintance who had overwhelmed her with too effusive admiration from one who could know her so slightly.

She had gained little and lost much in that interview, but she saw it would have had to come sooner or later and nothing could have made it different while there was a Gloria Sanfred in the world.

She watched listlessly while the servant removed the tea things. How easily the room was put in order! All evidence of this last meeting was now completely removed.

"Put out that lamp, Charles," she ordered, before the man left the room. It was the lamp under which Adrian had sat.

"Well, it is over," she said aloud, folding her hands as the door closed silently behind the servant.

Suddenly and involuntarily her thoughts fled to Italy and the gaudy little cemetery where her husband lay buried. It was odd to think of Barnard now. She had never loved him,

but her affection for him had been deep and well-grounded. Perhaps in these last passion-riddled years she had underestimated how greatly she had cared for him, his slow simplicity, his gentle, fumbling spirit. And he had loved her. Had he suffered as she suffered now, knowing all he could claim from her were liking and respect?

All? No. She had given him her happiness as well. Eight years ago Adrian had entered her life, an unacknowledged genius, a boy of twenty-two, to whom music was the breath of life. She had given up her musical career with her marriage, glad, at the time, to be rid of the eternal practicing, the stinting, the planning, hoping, and being disappointed. Critics had seen great promise in her, but this meant even harder work and more confining study. At twenty-one, having never known real freedom, she had married and had reveled in the carefree luxury her devoted and wealthy husband was able to shower upon her. Ten years of marriage had awakened her to the uselessness of her easy, unproductive life. She was less bored than conscience-stricken when she found herself thirty-one years old with nothing to show for having lived so long. She had failed to become a mother, and she only dabbled enough with her music to regret her abandoned career and to remember the critics' "promise" with heartache.

Adrian had been the solution. She could help him, for he was poor and unknown. In him she intended to give the world all she had withheld from it herself. She enlisted her good-natured husband's ready aid, and the days no longer seemed profitless. From the start it was a dangerous relationship although it seemed so safe. The boy had naturally fallen in love with his guardian angel. And—how clearly she could see it now!—of course, in spite of his protests at the time, it had been the love of the acolyte for the image.

Was this true or was she merely accepting his distorted vision of the past, the picture he set before himself and her to excuse himself now? Had there really been no difference between the look in his face in those days and what she beheld this afternoon? She tried to recall the boy he had been. She tried to bring to mind, above all, the clear recollection of him as he had been that one, wonderful and terrible afternoon when he had made his plea to her, to renounce all for the sake of what now he so glibly denied. He had been playing the first movement of the "Appassionata Sonata" which, in the high-handed manner of most young musicians, he had dedicated to her, or rather to his feeling for her. She recalled how well he had played it with its majesty and turbulence. In her heart, it always reminded her of him. She had a sudden hunger to hear it now and, by its aid, to recapture the joy of the past and a forgetfulness of the present.

She stood up impetuously, but she lingered on her way to the door. She remembered how she had been unable to play the last time she had tried. Then her desire for the Beethoven music drove her on. She crept downstairs stealthily, like one afraid of being detected or of scaring away her own mood. The drawing-room was chilly after the fire-warmed library. She shivered and was somewhat repelled by its dismal atmosphere; then, feeling her way through the shadows to the piano, switched on the lamp near it.

She knew the sonata well. She had played it, and it was still in her fingers, so she needed only a glance or two at the score to bring it back. After the first phrase or two she forgot to listen merely for notes. It carried her along as the sea carries along the swimmer who loves it. It conjured up for her the Adrian she desired, the Adrian who was hers.

"A month," she thought. "I have a month. Could I win him back? Is there nothing left with which to kindle the old fire?"

The thought excited, but depressed her. Suppose she succeeded in some miraculous way. The world was full of Gloria Sanfreds, young, beautiful, and flattering in their adoration. What had happened once could happen even more distressingly again. Suppose she had to feel that she had won him out of pity, that he had turned to her as she had turned to Bannard, and that he was living with her, dreaming of the time she would die and he might go to another woman, or secretly giving his love and life to other women.

The sonata came to an abrupt end. She dropped her face in her cupped hands with an irrepressible sob. Then she became aware that she was not alone in the room. A hard, dry, little cough sounded behind her, startling her into swift self-mastery.

"No wonder your eyes hurt you, Cicely, my child," said Anton Perre-gaux, "when you abuse them in light like this."

"It wasn't my hurt eyes and you know it," she replied grimly. "Anton, tell me 'the best is yet to be, the last of life for which the first was made.'"

"I'm afraid, my dear, that was a pious mid-Victorian lie. Growing old is no pleasure."

"Thanks for admitting it. I could not have borne the optimism I ask for. And don't call me a woman for that. It's human. Will you stay for dinner? I am all alone."

"You are too much alone. Yes, I will stay, and afterward you will come with me to the symphony concert."

She hesitated, gazing down at her relaxed hands.

"Why is it hard for me to say yes? Why was it hard for me to touch this piano? Is it a respect for tradi-

tion or is formal mourning more deep-rooted in us than we believe?"

"While we live in a world of people, both. But you have no time to waste on it."

"Time?" she repeated startled. Her mind flashed her the word "month"—the month before Adrian would be utterly lost to her. "What do you mean, Anton?"

"You must get to work. It will be hard after so many years of idleness, but it is necessary to support life. It, only, is life."

"You are talking riddles, Anton."

"The key is, you are going back on the concert stage where you belong."

"Anton! No! I couldn't!" she gaped sharply.

He bowed his head before the pain in her eyes, and for a moment he was silent.

"You have no right to bury your talent," he said gently. "It is happiness for you and for others. You ask me for some recompense for youth which is past. Is it not the interpretation of life? If there is any, it must be, it seems to me, the memory of our experience, our suffering, our joy, and the ability to portray these. You are too young and virile to keep those memories to yourself. You have energy and must make something of them for others. You, above most, are privileged to be able to give. Your gray hairs won that for you."

"What have I that most have not?" she demanded skeptically.

"Money."

"What happiness can that buy?"

"A hearing of your talent."

It was so unexpectedly and harshly practical that it stimulated, rather than revolted her.

"You think I can buy a career?"

"I said a hearing. You must work for what will follow the hearing. That will do you good."

She had to smile at his tone.

"You think I have the energy you possess?"

"Energy, dear friend, is not a special gift. It is a free dispensation like air and water. Our fault is, that because of that, perhaps, as in the case of air and water, we take too little of it," he answered. "Be serious about this, my child. It is your salvation."

She shook her head.

"I don't want salvation. I want to be lost. I am tired of exerting energy of any sort." She rose and began to pace the room. "I want to drift. I want"—she stopped suddenly with hardening jaws—"I want to pray to God for happiness and have Him answer my prayer."

"He gave you the means." Anton motioned to the piano, but she turned away impatiently.

"Please, my dear Anton, get that out of your mind. An ambition and a musician can be utterly destroyed in fifteen years. Come, let's change the subject! Adrian Valdebar was here this afternoon."

"So?" He raised his eyebrows. "At last he remembered to come."

"I sent for him," she said after a moment's hesitation. "Anton, what did you mean the other night when you said an artist should marry an artist?"

"Did I say that?" he asked quizzically. "I should have said an artist should not marry at all, for the sake of his bride."

"Do not joke, Anton. Is Adrian's marriage going to ruin his career?"

"Perhaps. Who knows?"

"You think it doesn't matter?"

"Everything matters, but I am more interested in your career. Every one ought to do his best. I have little influence over you, alas, but none at all over him! I will use my influence where I can."

"You intend to keep pestering me?" She smiled in spite of herself.

"I owe that to the world of music."

2—Ains.

Cicely seated herself at the piano and stroked several notes softly before replying. She knew he was watching her and it roused her to malicious perversity.

"I shall follow your teaching," she said at last.

His whole face lighted joyfully.

"You will study to return?"

"That is not my meaning."

"What then?" He was gruff with his disappointment.

"I shall use my influence where I can. My career is Adrian Valdebar's."

"But have you any right to it?"

For the moment she hated him.

"What right have you to me?" she asked in reply.

He met her cold gaze bravely, then, flushing scarlet, he turned away.

"Well," he exclaimed dryly and enigmatically, "God likes to have his joke!"

## CHAPTER VI.

Cicely got word from Valdebar next morning that he and his fiancée would be in to see her the next afternoon.

"We shan't be able to stay more than a few minutes," he explained over the telephone. "She is so rushed, you see, buying her trousseau and being entertained and all that. You'll understand, won't you, dear?"

"Yes, Adrian. I'll understand," she had answered.

That afternoon she was to have tea with Mrs. Pierce and she found herself expecting information which might help her through the next day's critical visit. She found herself facing the vision of Gloria Sanfred, bracing herself as if to encounter an enemy. She had some childish hope of annihilating her, figuratively speaking, blotting her out of life and especially out of the mind and desire of Adrian Valdebar. They were not married yet. In a month it would be too late even to dream.

Mrs. Pierce was glad to see her and

mothered her cozily, having an elderly aunt present to help in the process. She had much to tell about the numerous and confusing members of her family, and Cicely began to wonder if she, herself, would ever get the chance to lead the conversation anywhere when Mrs. Pierce suddenly brought up the subject of Gloria Sanfred.

"Ellen is more excited over her chum's engagement than over her own sister's," she confided. "Of course, Gloria is to be married sooner—in about a month, now, I believe. But you'd think she'd be shopping with her sister, anyway, wouldn't you? Well, she's not. She and Gloria are inseparable. Gloria Sanfred, you know. Her father's a big corporation lawyer—oh, immensely wealthy people! Why, you must have seen the girl, yourself! She was down at the dock the day we came in. She went to please Ellen. She goes out of her way to be popular, I think. I don't believe I ever met her before I went away, although Ellen assures me I must have. But I'd have remembered her. She's lovely looking. She's engaged to some one you said you knew, that musician, Adrian Valdebar, now I come to think of it. The pianist."

"Yes, he told me so," said Cicely quietly.

"Then you've met her?"

"No, not yet. Was she a school friend of your daughter's?"

"No. Ellen is younger by nearly two years. They met at a dance or something at the Country Club last spring, and Ellen became perfectly fascinated. You know what girls are—girls of seventeen. Ellen is not really out yet, you see, and I suppose that adds, that Gloria is so condescending. Anne says so. Anne is a little jealous of her. They both have a taste for music, Ellen and Gloria, I mean. I think they were both of them in love with that young

Valdebar—and that was the bond. I'm just as glad Ellen wasn't so eligible."

"What do you mean?"

"Age and perhaps other things. I don't want a musician for Ellen."

"You think——"

"I think silently. I distrust temperament. I predict disaster. I hope for the best."

"They are unsuited?"

"Who? Oh, you mean Valdebar and Gloria! It's always dangerous. Did you know Nina Weathersby? She married a tenor. He was from common Italian stock. My dear, *he beat her!*" She whispered it with enjoyment.

"Miss Sanfred does not run that risk with Adrian Valdebar," smiled Cicely.

"True, you knew him very well, didn't you? Is he of good family?"

"I believe so; his people were artists, if that means anything."

"Ellen declared he was some sort of foreign noble. Is that true?"

"I hardly think so."

"I, either. Ellen was so mad about him this summer, they tell me, that she was ready to claim he was descended from a god or a goddess or something. I'm glad she takes it so well that her friend is to marry him."

"Then she is not jealous?"

"Not at all. In the first place, she is just as crazy about Gloria. In the second, she says he never gave her cause to think she had a chance with him. For a wonder, he does not seem to have been a flirt. Was he?"

"Not when I knew him," said Cicely.

"No; he seems to have behaved very well. He was never known to have been connected with any woman till he met Gloria. He became infatuated with her from the start. It was love at first sight for both of them. Well, it may turn out all right. After all, we have no right to judge, have we? And it's a different age altogether from what we knew. —Ellen is shopping with Gloria this afternoon. Sometimes she



brings her home to tea, and she may come in to-day. I hope so. I'd like you to see her and tell me what you think of her. Frankly, she puzzles me, though I can see her charm. When I am with her I quite lose myself in her, don't you, Aunt Fanny?"

The aunt, who had knitted silently like a mute Fate throughout this discussion, nodded gratefully, but made no remark.

Half an hour later Ellen came in and she did bring Gloria with her. Cicely heard them in the hall, before they entered, and her heart skipped a beat with excitement. They entered, chattering prettily, for all the world the conventional pair of society buds.

Ellen was small and dark and chic. She had a pert little nose and round, dark eyes which looked both startled and ingenuous. She bubbled with enthusiasm, and Cicely thought her refreshing, yet she realized that doubtless she would soon be tiresome.

On closer inspection, Gloria San-fred, however, proved a far rarer mixture of youth and keen poise. She had been schooled abroad and her voice had acquired a mellow sweetness which distinguished it from the tones of the average New Yorker. She was dressed with exquisite taste and style, yet she contrived a touch or two of color, a stroke of genius here and there, which made her costume notable and individual. "A modish Burne-Jones," was Cicely's inward summary. She was rather tall and slim, with the concave nose so dear to the Pre-Raphaelites, and the full, wistful mouth. Her eyes were long and dark blue, set deeply under arched, dark brows. In repose her face suggested a tender sadness, especially her profile. But when she spoke a sharp, almost hard intelligence suffused her, a sophistication beyond her years or possible experience. At times she was naive, at times grave and wondering,

and often there flashed from her a caustic humor which suggested incredible cynicism.

She took Cicely's hand with the graciousness of a great actress receiving an admiring stranger.

"Mrs. Bannard!" She repeated the name with geniality. "Adrian has told me how much I am to expect when I really know you. I was looking forward to to-morrow and my anticipation has been gloriously anticipated. It looks as if destiny couldn't wait to see us friends."

"It is charming of you to say that," said Cicely, overwhelmed and wilting a little under the blue steel in the other's direct gaze.

"I love any one Adrian loves," said the girl with a disconcerting plunge into commonplace simplicity, out of keeping with her manner in general and her next remark in particular. "That is the only way to make marriage supportable, isn't it?"

"A trousseau alone would do that for me," put in Ellen with an ecstatic sigh, over her teacup. "I've been seeing so much of yours and Anne's that I shall get reckless and marry before I'm even out."

"I wish you would," said her mother. "It would save me a lot of trouble and your debutante trousseau as well."

"Oh, but mothers don't really want to be saved trouble, do they?" demanded Gloria. "I have to assure my dear *maman* every day that I shall be twice as much of a bother to her married as single."

Ellen giggled adoringly at the rather futile little jest. Gloria rather frankly accepted her homage and played up to it. She practically took charge of the conversation, but she managed it skillfully to include the three elder women. She even managed to extract a sentence or two from the reticent Aunt Fanny and she made it a point to defer constantly to Cicely. Once in a while

Cicely detected a delicate hostility in her consideration. They were discussing a negligee they had seen at a fashionable dressmaker's.

"It looked so easy to make, if one only dared to try," said Ellen. "But I suppose the lines——"

"Lines!" repeated Gloria quickly. "That's a word they teach us to frighten us off. Incantations are lines. Lines are incantations. Why shouldn't material be as tractable for us as for them? Do *you* know, Mrs. Bannard? Did you ever make anything for yourself?"

"Yes," said Cicely evenly. "In my young days, frequently."

Gloria's glance traveled swiftly up and down the length of Cicely's black dress. Her voice became confidential and friendly.

"Adrian has told me. You used to be quite poor, when you were a girl," she said guilelessly.

"In America every one was once quite poor, or else will be," said Mrs. Pierce easily. "That fact has taught us to put financial requirements pretty low in the scale of our judgment."

"Say half a million," calculated Gloria; "at the lowest."

"Gloria!" protested Ellen, laughing.

"It depends on who we are," acknowledged Gloria.

"The people who count are above such snobbery," said Mrs. Pierce, rigidly optimistic.

"People who count what?" asked Gloria innocently.

"You mean people who don't count, mother," said Ellen.

"Every one counts in that sense," said Cicely smoothly, hiding her irritation. "Artists above all."

Gloria took it gallantly, but Mrs. Pierce resented it.

"Surely they are above materialism."

"Portrait painters and architects and others, use society for the sole purpose of counting," said Cicely.

"And musicians?" inquired Gloria. "Hurrah, I shall now hear to my face the scandal about Adrian marrying me for money!"

It was what Cicely had intended to imply, to hurt Gloria's pride, but her arrow had lodged in Adrian's reputation. Cicely felt both thwarted and discredited.

"Hardly, from me who know him so well," she said rather sullenly. "Could you expect it?"

"I always expect it. And always deny to myself that I expect it. I like to be disappointed in people. It increases my self-respect," said Gloria lightly.

"Oh, Gloria!" gasped Ellen again, convulsed.

"That's not clever. It's smug," said Mrs. Pierce reprovingly.

"Oh, it is clever, and it is smug, too, I admit!" laughed Gloria. "But you won't hate me for it, will you, Mrs. Pierce?" She went to the older woman and wound her slim arm about her neck affectionately. "And you won't see distorted images of me when I do my little mental handspings, will you? If I am smug in my wickedness, I am at least humble in my virtues."

"That sounds like Oscar Wilde. Does it mean anything?" asked Ellen curiously.

"Oscar would never have said that. It doesn't mean much, but it sounds too modest for him. You wanted me to show you how Adrian takes that phrase in 'Clair de la Lune,' don't you? Well, come in or I shan't have time. I'm due home right now."

"So soon!" mourned Ellen. With quick nods they excused themselves and disappeared into the adjoining room, and in a moment the clear, technically fine playing of Adrian's fiancée penetrated to Cicely's ears. Mrs. Pierce, who had started to comment on her daughter's coiffure, stopped, perceiving the look on her guest's face.



"Oh, forgive my thoughtlessness! We have all forgotten your mourning." She moved toward the door.

"No!" Cicely detained her, rising, too. "It is not that. I must accustom myself to music. I love it. Do not stop her. I am going, anyway. I did not think——" She broke off and listened in cold jealousy to a particularly difficult bit which seemed to trickle from Gloria's fingers like foam. "How well she plays!"

"People have urged her to go in for it professionally."

"That, too?" whispered Cicely. She saw the puzzled look in the other's eyes and drew herself together. "Why not?" she went on aloud. "And does Adrian, her—her betrothed—encourage her ambition?"

"Yes, they say she has acquired her virtuosity since her engagement. She says he inspires her."

"And teaches her?"

"I believe so. A pupil in love is very apt."

"Yes, yes, I know. It has been delightful." Cicely drew on her coat and fur and held out her hand. "Au revoir. You will come to see me soon?"

"I hate to see you go," said Mrs. Pierce kindly. "I'm sure you must be lonely. You sometimes look—ouch!" She raised her shoulders defensively as a discord from the next room assailed them. "I don't know much about modern music, but was that intended?" she asked.

"No." Cicely hated herself for being glad of this error of Gloria's. She was able to be generous. "It was an impossibly difficult passage," she said; "and she is retrieving herself—beautifully."

"But on the concert stage," objected Mrs. Pierce, "such things would be indefensible, wouldn't they? It isn't so easy."

"She is finished. My car is down-

stairs. Can I drop her anywhere?" parried Cicely as the music ceased.

"I'll ask," said Mrs. Pierce, and went into the other room, to reappear almost instantly with both girls.

"It is lovely of you, but Ellen won't let me go," said Gloria, with sudden youthful shyness. "I'll see you tomorrow."

They said good-by formally, and a few minutes later Cicely was driving away in the deepening dusk.

"I have been catty, jealous, petty, futile, and cowardly," she told herself. "Above all, I've been miserable. I'm afraid of her. Deadly afraid. She is stealing everything from me."

That evening she feverishly practiced scales and exercises for two hours; then she went to bed feeling baffled and weak, and cried herself to sleep.

## CHAPTER VII.

All day the next day Cicely found herself waiting anxiously for the promised visit of Gloria and Adrian. She wanted to see them together. It was torture for her, the torture of those minutes just before an expected and fatal blow. At last, about half-past four, and somewhat earlier than she had thought likely, the doorbell rang.

"Thank God," she heard herself murmur, and became aware of her tension by the relaxing of her body which preceded the girding of her nerves anew. The butler appeared with a single card, Adrian's card.

"Is he alone?" she asked, astonished.

"Yes, madam."

Disappointment, relief, and something like fear battled for a moment within her.

"He may come up," she said.

She met Adrian at the threshold of the library.

"But where is—is——"

"Gloria? She told me to come early and she would meet me here," said

Adrian, shaking her hand and looking at her curiously. She realized that she was pale and her hands were chill.

"Sit down," she said formally. "I was expecting you together. I suppose she is so very busy."

"Yes, but she will surely come. She told me she met you yesterday at the Pierces'." It seemed to her there was constraint in his manner.

"I hope she likes me as I like her."

"You *do* like her?" he demanded earnestly.

"Very much. She is so beautiful—and talented."

"She wonders why I did not fall in love with you."

"What did you answer to that?"

"I told her I was as much in love with you as it was possible for me to be once upon a time." He smiled. "But she was not envious of my past."

"What need has she to be? It means nothing at all to you now."

"That is not true, Cicely. Must I tell you again? I have not altered; I have merely grown," he declared.

"Grown?" She raised her brows ironically. "New love spells growth, I see. But suppose—suppose I had taken you seriously and left James for you five years ago?"

"I should have grown differently."

"And Gloria?"

"For me there would have been no Gloria."

"I wonder."

"Let us be glad, then, that you were so wise and strong and avoided involving us both."

"It makes me afraid for you, dear boy."

"You think me fickle?" He looked startled.

"Temperamental."

"Be assured, I am certain this time. This is real love."

"Because it is so different from the last time you thought you had found real love?"

"Maybe, because the other still persists and can live beside this," he answered gently.

"That might prove something more dangerous," she hinted.

"What?"

"Artists are seldom monogamous."

"Cicely! Are you joking?"

"Forgive me!" She pulled herself up quickly. "Forget what I have been saying."

"Forgive?" he repeated, disturbed.

Silence hung between them awkwardly as they sat face to face, avoiding each other's glances. Cicely felt as if she had deliberately smeared a windowpane through which she might have watched a friend. She spoke at last, lamely.

"It was my desire for—her happiness—and yours," she said, and tried to believe herself. "Oh, can't you see?" she burst out desperately. "She must never know—what woman can suffer."

"Cicely!" he exclaimed, appalled. "Have I hurt you so?"

"No." She cowered swiftly behind her pride and tried to laugh it off. It was a bad move. Her overstrung nerves gave away and the next moment she was in tears.

He sprang to her side and drew her, resisting, into his arms.

"Cicely, my own dear Cicely! I have been a brute!" he cried in anguish.

"It is not your fault," she murmured.

"Yes, it must be. I am fickle. Oh, what right had I— But, dear, you must believe me. If we had married, I would never have looked at any one else. Please believe that!"

"Then you would have died without knowing real love?" she reminded him sadly, under her eyelashes.

He grew deep crimson, unable to answer her. Then suddenly, as if, by the action, to refute her statement, he bent over her and kissed her passionately.

As he released her the doorbell rang,

and they sprang apart quickly and guiltily.

"My eyes—my hair!" she exclaimed incoherently. "Oh, if—if your—if it's Miss Sanfred, have Charles send her up and I'll be right back. Have an excuse for me! Yes, I've gone to fetch some pictures you've asked to see." And she fled from the room.

Behind the closed door of her own room, she faced the woman she had become and was filled with anger greater than her shame.

"Why—didn't she come with him to begin with? Did she guess this could happen? Oh, I'm sure she did, and planned it! Will she rob me of my self-respect, too? *Could* she deliberately plan this, that child, that little girl? Is it not merely a figment of my debased brain that I can accuse her of it? I, who never saw wile and meanness in the world before?"

She dared not stay in her room too long. She bathed her eyes, powdered her face, and seized a little packet of snapshots from her desk. One dropped to the floor. It was Bannard in his wheel chair at one of the health resorts. She hastily thrust it back into the drawer. There were other pictures of Bannard there, she knew, and she did not have time to sort them out. Besides, she was beyond feeling squeamish about allowing him to help her out of this.

Help her out? But she had done nothing wrong.

"I suspect you arranged to leave us alone together," greeted Gloria as she entered the library. "But we do not mind having those who care about us greatly witness our happiness, do we, Ad?"

"I didn't have the ingenuity to arrange anything," answered Cicely smoothly. She was conscious that she faced the light while the girl's expression was masked with shadow. "I've been getting some pictures for Adrian."

"Pictures? How interesting!" She fell into her eager, débutante manner. "Pictures of yourself when you were young—I mean—*younger*?"

"No," answered Cicely. "I do not need to show Adrian pictures of those happy times. I prefer to leave them to the vagueness of his memories and risk no unflattering comparisons with the present. These were taken during the last five years abroad."

"May I look, too?" She peeped at the pictures in Adrian's hand.

"Surely."

"This is your husband?"

"Yes." Adrian answered for her.

"You loved him dearly, I'm sure." Her voice was sympathetic, almost caressing. She glanced at Cicely and then back to the picture. "The first thing I noticed about you was the simplicity of your mourning. That is a mark of sincerity. Women who have longed for their husbands to die cover the memory of that desire with crape afterward, to hide it."

Only as a platitude could this observation have been forgiven, thought Cicely, and Gloria was not one to indulge in platitudes.

"I did love my husband," said Cicely slowly. "I still love him."

"Adrian has told me how you devoted yourself to him while he was ill. You gave up everything in the world for him."

To her intense alarm, Cicely felt a sob rise to her throat. Adrian saved her by handing back the pictures to her, saying softly:

"It is a sad record. It unnerves one to look at it. What a hard time you have had!"

"It—it was peaceful," said Cicely huskily.

"To watch the man you love die?" demanded Gloria. "Oh, horrible! Adrian, promise if one of us has to watch the other suffer, it will be you."

I would rather, any day, be the patient than the nurse."

"I did not say to die was not the easier part," said Cicely somberly. Gloria, with a graceful, little, birdlike gesture, nestled suddenly against Adrian's shoulder.

"This isn't very cheerful," she declared.

"Then we'll change the subject," laughed Adrian. "Cicely, will you come to my recital Friday night?"

"In my box, with me!" begged Gloria instantly. "You can hide in the back, if you don't want to be seen."

"If I went, I should not go in hiding," said Cicely.

"Do—do come! Watch the women rave over Adrian and stare at my box and wish they were I, and engaged to him. I love his recitals! I revel in their covetousness, those others, who hate me for capturing their idol."

"You will come?" pleaded Adrian, smiling.

"I should like to hear you play, but I was hoping you would offer to play for me in private."

"Now? Oh, do, Ad! But on condition that Mrs. Bannard does come to the recital. Perhaps you'd come if Adrian were to offer you two orchestra tickets instead of the place in my box," she added.

"I should prefer it," said Cicely frankly.

"Oh!" Gloria raised her brows. "Yes, I see. It is less conspicuous and yet cannot be considered hiding. Unless it is that— Well, never mind. Where is your piano?"

"Downstairs."

"Come, Ad. Play now, and then we must go."

Cicely led the way, and they followed rather, silently. It was Gloria who broke the pause by exclaiming over the beauty of the piano and running over to it girlishly.

"I should think you'd want to be

practicing constantly with a piano like this," she said, after trying its tone.

Cicely could not concentrate upon Adrian's playing. It had not the power over her it once had had. Perhaps it was the disturbing influence of his fiancée's presence, or perhaps because she knew that no longer was he really playing exclusively to her. She was not even sharing his message. The part that counted belonged to another woman. She was constantly aware of Gloria. Once she saw the girl's eyes bent upon her, mysteriously intent. When their glance met the younger woman instantly flashed her a smile and nodded toward Adrian as if to say: "That was a brilliant bit, wasn't it?" It was a friendly communication, but Cicely hated herself for seeing friendliness behind it.

When they had left and she recalled the visit, she was ashamed of her hostility. Was it mere, common jealousy? Or wasn't there some truth in her dread that Gloria and what she stood for were hurting his work? She found justification in the thought that his playing seemed to have lost something of its power and beauty.

"She is harming him. She may ruin his career. If only I could save him!" she thought.

## CHAPTER VIII.

She invited Anton to dinner and to go with her to Adrian's recital, Friday night. Anton would help her judge at the concert whether or no Adrian's work was really falling off. He had been one of the first to recognize the boy's talent in the old days, and she felt that he would be both interested and unprejudiced. They had been good friends, Anton and Adrian. She wondered idly why they had become estranged. She remembered how they had begun to see less of each other even before she had gone to Europe. An-

ton had often annoyed her, in those days, by adopting a superior attitude toward Adrian, as if reproving him for a conceitedness he expected him to exhibit.

"As if," she mused whimsically, "he were personally affronted by Adrian's not acting in an offensive manner."

She wondered now if Anton's disapproval had not been unconsciously deflected from her. Perhaps he had seen her infatuation for her husband's protégé, or perhaps, at least, he had suspected it. It had taken a long time for him to become friendly with the quiet, heavy James Bannard. He had disapproved openly of her marriage. But gradually his respect had become real liking and, until Adrian had come into her life, Anton had been the Bannards' most frequent visitor. Well, she was rather relieved to think that here was one from whom she need not completely hide her suffering.

He came in good time for dinner, for promptness was one of his most endearing qualities. In evening dress he was rather a distinguished figure, although he would have been amazed had any one told him so. In spite of his Swiss origin his features seemed typically English and, with his ruddy complexion and gray hair, he suggested one of those early nineteenth-century portraits of English squires. His slight accent and foreign intonation were pleasant, too, being purer and more careful than the slovenly speech of too many native-born men whom Cicely knew.

"I should have waited a decent interval of widowhood and then fallen in love with and married Anton," she told herself suddenly. Yes, that would have been the sensible, proper, and nice thing for a woman of her age. "Then, I should have felt at least wholesome and excusable instead of seeing myself as a scheming old woman bent on stealing a young man from his young bride.

Oh, but that's not true! I want to rescue Adrian for his own and the world's sake. Marry him, myself? Even if he were free, perhaps I would hesitate. Yes, I have too much sense. Unless it were to protect him from further mistakes. Oh, Anton, I beg your pardon?"

He had asked her a question. She wondered if her inattention had been as prolonged and obvious as it seemed to her now. He gave no sign of being offended or surprised by her conduct.

"You think, dear child, I am too dressed up?" he asked, considerately covering the fact that she had been staring at him rudely and unseeingly. "I was not sure what you would wish, since I was to dine with you first. I feared appearing insensible of the honor, so long as I had had the opportunity to change."

"Anton—Anton!" she interrupted, laughing. "Aren't we old, old friends? Do we not date back to the time when evening dress was, for us, merely concert uniform? Have you, too, been bitten by these meaningless laws and shibboleths of society?"

"I? Cicely?" He looked amazed.

"Oh, then you thought it was I?"

"Why not, my dear one?"

"What put the idea into your head?"

"You would have me speak frankly, I know. For many years, because of your husband's ill health, you have been occupied with matters which excused you from doing your duty in the circle to which your marriage to him introduced you. In a few months you will have no longer a reason for your seclusion unless you make one for yourself. Do you really wish to withdraw from those 'meaningless laws and shibboleths' as you call them? And if so, with what are you going to fill your time? You must decide whether you intend to become a society woman or an artist."

"You do not think I could be both?"



"I do not know," he shrugged. "They tell me that society women work very hard. I know only that an artist must, and you above all, to make up for the years you have lost. Nothing would please me better, dear, than to see you absorbed in either of these—what shall I call them—careers."

"What mischief do you see Satan about to thrust into my hands because they are idle?" she asked quizzically, after a pause.

"Mischief? Ah, no, Cicely!" he protested, a little too promptly. "But we are happiest when we work hardest, aren't we, my child?"

"Witness worn-out factory hands or tired houseworkers," retorted Cicely. "Not always, Anton. We must find some meaning in our work, some joy and urge to go on."

"Would it mean nothing to you to speak with the tongue of, let us say, Beethoven to those who hunger for his message?" he asked. "You can be the interpreter of the greatest beauty in the world."

"Maybe I can give the world a greater interpreter than myself. Wouldn't that be better?"

"No, Cicely," he answered steadily. "It is your turn now."

She raised her brows and smiled and changed the subject.

From where they sat in Aeolian Hall she could see Gloria's box, quite near the stage, and Gloria sitting in it, with an elderly couple who might have been her parents and a young man. Later Ellen Pierce strolled in and decided to stay, although she pointed to a box on the other side of the house where, though she could not see them, Cicely guessed the Pierce party was located. Ellen was fluttering with pretty excitement in the smartest possible sub-débutante evening gown. Gloria was in a queenlike mood, to suit her handsome and somewhat severe gold dress. People looked at her and whispered,

some to wonder who she was, and others to tell.

"Gloria Sanfred is very beautiful," said Cicely, aware, all at once, that Anton had noticed where her attention was centered.

"And highly cultivated."

"Artificial?"

"No more than any hothouse flower. She is a successful experiment."

"You do not think Adrian ought to marry her?"

"I do not presume to think on the subject at all."

"Are you perfectly frank, Anton?"

"Are you, my child?"

At that moment there was a restless settling of the audience, followed by a little gale of applause. Adrian had appeared.

Memories of his first concert rushed upon Cicely, a blinding cloud of them. This Adrian, so graceful and poised, bowing acknowledgments of his applause, was the outgrowth of the bashful, awkward boy who had just given his work to a critical audience, seven years ago. Then he had been only a talented youth to her, with an ambition fine enough to arouse both pity and help. It was not till a year later that she had found in him the soul that wakened hers to the fact that love is rare and strange and pitiless and its joy agony.

She saw his glance toward Gloria's box, and it affected her like a blow under which she actually bowed her head and closed her eyes. Anton was applauding. She was keenly alive to this and to a thankfulness that he had not seemed to notice her emotion. It helped her pull herself together. If Adrian had tried to look in her direction, that black moment of hers had cheated her of his attention. He had gone to the piano and seated himself. Another brusque bow, and his hands touched the keys.

Then silence and a Chopin waltz.

It was, as it happened, a waltz over which in the past they had worked together, and their discussions of its phrasing came to her now. His present interpretation differed from that which they had decided on then, although it showed it had been based on it. He had used what she had given him and gone on growing. Yes, his playing was finer, more mature, broader, wiser, and surer. He had not stopped when she went out of his life. The years since she had seen him must have been rich and sustaining.

He did not need her. He needed no one, now, for he had his own strength on which to stand. If her longing for him had been all maternal, why did it persist when she saw he was no longer a child? She wondered if the hurt she felt were not the pang of the mother who, hearing her son talk of strangers to her, for the first time realizes his individuality and independence.

"I must not deceive myself. I am nothing to him and I must set him free," she thought.

Then, in a passionate swell of the music, she forgot all except her love for him and the stark loneliness of her life as she saw him passing out of it.

## CHAPTER IX.

A few mornings later the invitation to the Sanfred-Valdebar wedding arrived. Cicely handled it numbly over her breakfast tray. She regarded the engraving with curiosity. She indulged herself in the bad taste of looking under the flap of the envelope for the maker's name. She noted that Gloria's father's name was Reginald, and she wondered if they would insist on naming a grandchild Reginald Valdebar. She even smiled at her own premature anxiety on the subject.

She could not touch her breakfast, and the scent of the coffee sickened her, but the pain of the familiar heartache

was gone. In its place there were merely weakness and nausea and a strange, blind, tired feeling behind her eyes. She began to worry about a suitable gift; then her thoughts began to wander. She speculated that Adrian had been responsible for the invitation. He must have known what an empty compliment it was, for her mourning alone would keep her away, had she had no other reason. She conjured up a vision of them consulting whether or not to send her the cards. For one blazing second she wondered what it would be like to go—to the church, anyway. She pictured the bride, a Burne-Jones bride, with longing in her eyes and mouth, both spiritual and fleshly. She saw the boy's head bend over the white veil and, with a gasp, shut out the imagined kiss.

"I'll go downtown and look about for a present," she thought feverishly, and reached for the telephone to order her car. Then she rang for her maid and rose. Her knees felt weak and her head light. The room heaved and spun about her.

She found herself opening her eyes and looking into the troubled face of Julia, her maid, who held smelling salts beneath her nose, while Mrs. Linsley chafed her hands. Her first thought was that she had dreamed about the invitation and this was her first awakening this morning, for she was lying in her bed as if she had made no attempt to rise. The haunting smell of coffee made her shudder and, glancing over the silk counterpane, she saw that the stiff cream-colored paper and card were realities and no dream.

"At last! My goodness, Mrs. Bannard, we thought we should never have you awake!" exclaimed the housekeeper in relief. "I hope you don't mind, ma'am, but we've taken the liberty of sending for Doctor Calshaw, that was Mr. Bannard's doctor before he took

up with all those specialists." Her tone implied that he might have been here now, if he had let those specialists alone.

"Did I faint?" asked Cicely languidly.

"Yes, ma'am," said Julia, glad of her turn to explain. "I heard you ring and when I come in, there you was lying on the floor, large as life, ma'am. I couldn't lift you myself so I called Mrs. Linsley to help get you into bed. We was awful scared, ma'am. You looked so white and all, like it was a kind of a fit you was in."

"Not at all, Mrs. Bannard," put in Mrs. Linsley severely. "Any lady can faint, and you've been through enough, if you'll pardon my presumption in saying so, ma'am. Five years attending an invalid tells on any one, even very young people."

"Am I so old then, Mrs. Linsley?" smiled Cicely. "Never mind, I know I am not young and that is one reason why I fainted. But I don't think I need a doctor. I feel all right now."

"He's on his way and he's a bit touchy, Mrs. Bannard, so might I ask you please to stay in bed till he comes? Else he may take it out of me," begged Mrs. Linsley with cunning.

Cicely saw through this ruse, but she was rather glad to comply. She still felt relaxed and depressed. She wondered at the heaviness of her hands. Was she dying of a broken heart? Did such things actually happen as old ballad singers used to tell of?

She must have dozed, for suddenly she heard the cheerful voice of a man, tones familiar, yet distant.

"So, you see, you need me the minute you get back," said Doctor Calshaw genially. "You look all right. What's the matter with you?"

It troubled her that a heavy listlessness prevented her returning his greeting. She was glad that he tucked a thermometer into her mouth and was

silent as he counted her pulse beats. She looked at his face, so close to hers at the edge of the bed, the serious, down-turned eyes, the furrowed and weathered brow, the hair grown silver-white in these last years since he had bent over James Bannard as he bent over her now. He looked up quickly.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

She shook her head, still muted by the thermometer, and she flushed. He had noticed the sudden quickening of her pulse following the start with which she saw herself again in her husband's place. Is it our punishment in life to be situated at some time exactly as some one we once wronged?

He released her hand, took the thermometer from her lips, and completed his examination. He wrote a prescription and gave his instructions, then he sat staring at her in silence.

"Your whole trouble, of course," he said, "is with your nerves. They're in a shocking state. What I ought to be giving you in place of bromide and valerian is an order to hire a Dutch uncle to come and talk with you."

She thought of Anton Perregaux and smiled.

"One has," she said. "To no purpose."

"Well, when I say hire, I mean a professional—a psychoanalyst."

"Oh, no, please, doctor!"

"Hum, I think you know what's the matter with you and I'm enough of a neurologist to be able to guess." His scrutiny disturbed her and she turned away her head. "Something came between you and your husband before he died."

"Doctor!" she gasped, paling.

"Oh, I'm not saying anything serious was the trouble! But people don't grieve for the dead to the edge of a nervous collapse, simply because they are dead. We all are aware, too, well, of our own mortality. Nor were you, after so many years, so hopelessly in

love that life became insupportable without your husband." He leaned forward and clasped her hand. His face was kindly and wholesome. "Mrs. Bannard," he said, "don't ever regret the irrevocable. Forget the past and build a new and useful future on it. Be yourself and not a projected shadow of what you were. Now, I want you to go away for a few days. Somewhere where it isn't too quiet. See people and life about you and adjust yourself. Go with a friend, or alone—whichever you prefer. Do whatever you want to do in the way of thinking out your own problem; then settle it once and for all. I'd advise Atlantic City, with the sea by day—if you like the sea—and crowds, and shops, and by night the theater or motion pictures. As your physician, I should like to put a stop to this formal mourning of yours. It does no one any good, least of all James Bannard."

He rose, and her relief in seeing he had not really guessed her trouble made her feel almost gay.

"I'll believe and trust your judgment," she said, generous with her praise in her gratitude for his mistake. "Must it be Atlantic City? And motion pictures?"

"No; whatever would normally amuse you."

"If you had said 'yes,' I could have thought of a thousand places I should have preferred. Now I can only look hopefully and favorably on your suggestion," she complained.

"Those are my methods. Good-by. Stay in bed for a day or two just for the rest. But be off as soon as possible."

She lay for a long time after he left her, thinking of his strange diagnosis of her state of mind and wondering if there could be anything to it. It was a relief to think of Bannard. To indulge a bit on that regret for having slighted him, that the doctor specially forbade her.

To cast off formal mourning. To go to the wedding? No; she mustn't think of that. The doctor was right. She must get away from New York now, from the morbid temptation of self-torture. The thought of the sea and the holiday-making crowd attracted her. Her impulse to run away from the present and to drug herself against contemplation of the future made her feel she could not get to Atlantic City too soon.

#### CHAPTER X.

She sat watching the sunlit sweep of November sea from the end of the pier. She was feeling quieter now, rested and patient. She found herself telling herself she could wait. She did not know specifically what was to be the reward of her waiting. In a week Adrian and Gloria were to be married and then Adrian would be completely lost to her, but not more lost than he was now. Perhaps what she was waiting for had something to do with the temporary character of modern marriage in Gloria's set. As the thought crossed her mind out here on the pier, she unconsciously drew deeper into her big fur collar like a turtle in the sight of danger.

Seated on the bench beside her was a small, stout woman of her own age, who appeared older because of her bad figure. They had recognized each other at the hotel as old acquaintances. She was a Mrs. Bellows, whose husband had been a business friend of James Bannard's. Cicely was surprised to see how five years had aged her; for her memory held Anita Bellows as a slight elf of a woman, inclined to be kittenish on the strength of her smallness. She learned the reason was partly due to the access of flesh which had followed a siege of illness and partly due to the fact that Mrs. Bellows' daughter, a girl of eighteen, was a débutante and a rather wearing one to engineer, as

she was not extremely popular. The girl was staying with her mother at Atlantic City for a few days, and they were waiting for her out here. The Bellowses were not an interesting pair, but they kept Cicely from being completely alone and helped her carry out her doctor's instructions to go to the playhouses. Cicely was sure Mrs. Bellows did not approve of this conduct for so recently bereaved a widow and this unspoken criticism spurred Cicely on.

"Are you cold?" asked Mrs. Bellows.

"No," answered Cicely. "It is pleasant here."

"Nothing like the sea for a tonic," yawned Mrs. Bellows. "So you're going to stay for another week, you think?"

"I hope so."

"I'd like nothing better! But Nita must be in town. There's the Relief dance and that Sanfred wedding; she's going both places."

"I'll see." Cicely bit her lip. This was the first she had heard of their intimacy with the Sanfreds.

"It's going to be a wonderful affair from what I hear," went on Mrs. Bellows. "Nita's ordered her dress for it, silver lace over blue."

"The Relief dance?"

"Oh, no, that's just one of those hodgepodge affairs! The wedding. You used to know Adrian Valdebar, didn't you?"

"Yes. Mr. Bannard thought he had great promise."

"I thought so. I suppose you'll be at the church wedding?"

"No," answered Cicely. Mrs. Bellows' eyes asked: "Weren't you invited?" Cicely went on, with a little flush, "Thank Heaven, in prescribing entertainment for me, my doctor drew the line at elaborate weddings."

"You always were a recluse, weren't you? I used to wonder about it, but I'm beginning to agree with you now.

It's not what it was, or maybe I'm getting old. And Nita is—well, *difficile*. Girls are so restless nowadays and eccentric. Spoiled, I call it. Imagine Gloria Sanfred, with the full approval of her family, making a gorgeous affair of her wedding to a scrubby musician who came from Heaven knows what! He was the season's catch simply because last year every girl in the younger set and a lot of older women, too, went perfectly insane over him. Did you ever hear him play?"

"Naturally."

"Oh, yes! I keep forgetting. I'm not sure I didn't hear him at your house. He never turned my head. Of course, I don't profess to be a musician, but they say it isn't only his music, it's his personality. Did he ever impress you as irresistible?"

"He is somewhat younger than we are."

"That doesn't prevent women like Mrs. Lynn-Weston carrying on like a schoolgirl over him. Thank goodness my Nita never got the fever, although she's an intense admirer of him as a pianist. I suppose I should have had to act as Mrs. Sanfred is acting, appear to approve to save my face. Well, we haven't the Sanfred bank account, and that's a protection in some ways."

"I hope you don't consider Adrian a mere fortune hunter?"

"I beg your pardon. I always forget you knew him so well. Oh, I don't think he's marrying her just for money, but——"

"They are deeply in love."

"Yes, I dare say. As a matter of fact I believe that if she lost her money, the wedding would be more likely to take place than if he lost his prestige. Do you know Gloria Sanfred?"

"If I were to tell you I was a close friend of hers, it would embarrass you greatly after what you have said," smiled Cicely.

"It would astonish me more than it



would embarrass me. She has no close women friends, except that little Pierce girl that chases after her like a pet puppy. They say she's brilliant, but as hard as nails, and a consummate actress, even at her age—which they claim is nineteen. She can't really fool women although she fascinates men, partly because of her gold background."

Cicely shrugged. She detected the envy in the mother of the ugly duckling and rather pitied the fat little woman who had always overestimated her own social success and now saw its evanescence when she needed it most to help her daughter.

"There's Nita now," she said.

Anita Bellows was small and stout like her mother. She did not know how to dress or how to choose the proper dressmaker, which is more important. She was young and bright-eyed, but a little too good-natured, with the occasional fits of insurmountable obstinacy, characteristic of such people.

Just now she was intensely excited.

"Mother, let's leave to-morrow instead of Monday and stop over in Philadelphia to-morrow night. Valdebar is giving a recital there. I never knew a thing about it until I got this from Fanny." And she held out a letter.

Cicely felt herself start violently. Adrian in Philadelphia. Was he to be alone? As if in answer to her thought, Nita went on:

"Fanny says Gloria Sanfred's too busy to go with him. It'll be his last concert as a bachelor and really his first in a long time without her poking herself out of a box and practically shouting to the audience, 'He's mine!' Come on, mother! Maybe we'll meet him."

"I don't see it at all, Nita. You sound very undignified. What will Mrs. Bannard think of you?"

Actually Cicely had already adopted

this foolish little girl's program as her own.

"I think," she said with an indulgent smile, "that I should like to go with you and hear him play, too. Shan't we all go together?"

"See, mother!" exclaimed Nita excitedly. "Oh, Mrs. Bannard, aren't you crazy about him? My dear, isn't he the most wonderful man in the world? Did you ever see such eyes? I think it helps a musician to be handsome."

"Nita, Mrs. Bannard knows Mr. Valdebar personally. Do you think it's nice to speak like that of one of her friends?" asked Mrs. Bellows.

"Why not? I only said complimentary things about him. I don't see how one could say anything else. Do you know him well, Mrs. Bannard? He wouldn't know me, although I've met him, through Gloria Sanfred, you know. Do you suppose we could go back and see him after the recital? I'll go to the hotel and telephone for tickets."

"But we haven't decided to go yet!" exclaimed Mrs. Bellows protestingly.

"Yes, we have. And it was awfully sweet of Mrs. Bannard to stand by me."

"This is ridiculously selfish of you, Nita; the doctor wanted me to stay here as long as possible. You spoil her, Mrs. Bannard, by making me give in to her whims like this."

"I am giving in to a whim of my own," said Cicely, rising. Nita thrust her pudgy hand through Cicely's arm.

"That's dear of you," she whispered. "Mother has no ear for music; she even pretends she does not think Valdebar's good looking."

Cicely flushed. She saw herself for what she was, just such another foolish moth, hopelessly beating against a light that was not for her. She could be ranked with Mrs. Lynn-Weston, for she was too old to be picturesquely

silly. Then she threw back her head, glorying proudly in her own humiliation.

## CHAPTER XI.

When the others had gone to their rooms after their arrival in Philadelphia the next afternoon, Cicely descended to the hotel office and asked if Adrian Valdebar were expected and whether he had arrived. She was confused when the clerk looked at her in silence for a moment and seemed unable or unwilling to reply.

"Are you a relative or a close friend of his?" he stammered at last. His worried manner took from the question any vestige of impertinence and filled her with uneasiness rather than indignation.

"I'm a very close friend," she answered. "Has anything happened to him?"

The clerk swallowed hard and nodded vaguely. Cicely steadied herself against the edge of the desk. —

"He—he has been rather badly hurt—in a taxicab accident. We've just had word. He was on his way here from the station about half an hour ago. He has been taken to the city hospital."

"How badly hurt?" Cicely asked mechanically.

"There were no details. That's all the management knows, except that his recital has been called off, of course."

"Yes, of course." Cicely moved away. She must go at once to the city hospital. That was her only thought.

She secured a taxi and gave the address. It was a strange ride. She was keenly alive to the visual impressions, through the cab window, of the deepening gray of the gloaming, lit by smears or points of light that ranged in color from burnt orange to pearly white. She vividly noted the people hurrying along the sidewalks or halted in the road to let the traffic by, their faces

rubber-colored in the dusk, a world of corpses.

That was what life would be with Adrian dead. She, who had grudged him love and marriage, saw him now deprived of both and felt the unreasonable guilt of the sensitive, who are apt to value their thoughts as actions. She seemed to see him most clearly not as he was in the old days nor the successful pianist of Aeolian Hall, but as he sat in her library that afternoon only a few weeks ago with the lamplight on his face, bringing out all its changes, his new strength and poise, a nobler maturity.

Then her mind leaped to the scene of her husband's deathbed. She thought of the pain-tortured man past sixty, facing death with resentment and aggression. He had wanted to live, having so little to live for. And was this boy, who possessed so much, to be taken as remorselessly?

For a moment she became practical and wondered if the hospital officials would allow her to go in to see him. She planned declaring herself to be his mother or his wife.

The taxi stopped before the hospital. She really had singularly little difficulty. He was still under the effects of ether, they thought, but if she would wait in the reception room, they would let her know. His manager, Mr. Russell, was in there, too, they believed.

But the room was empty. Russell had gone out to send telegrams and smooth out his ruined evening. Presently a nurse entered, looking about hesitatingly.

"Are you for Mr. Valdebar?" she asked, approaching Cicely.

"Yes. How is he?"

"Quite well, considering. He's out of ether, but not very clear minded. He has been asking for some one and seems distressed. Do—are— He is calling for Gloria. Can you help us?"

"I think so. Gloria is Miss Sanfred,

his fiancée. Has she been notified of this?"

"I do not know. I shall find out for you. Will you come up?"

"Surely. Tell me. Is he—is he—badly hurt?"

"Very seriously, but not necessarily fatally. At the very worst, it may mean an amputation of the arm."

"Amputation!" Cicely gasped. "His arm!"

"It is horrible," admitted the nurse. "But after all, when life is at stake or——"

Cicely continued to stare at her, breathing heavily.

"This is Valdebar, the pianist. Without his arm he would be like a painter who has gone blind. Can you understand that?"

The nurse weighed the calamities briskly.

"Oh, blindness is much worse!" she protested. "There are always other things for armless men to do, while the handicap of blindness is unthinkable." She led the way to the elevator, and Cicely followed her, speechless. The nurse was undoubtedly talking reasonably, with that cool, clear vision of facts which irritates to the point of torture.

They entered the white, severely clean room. On the high, narrow bed lay Adrian, hideously bandaged. He turned and stared at Cicely, with eyes already large and sunken with pain in his pallid face.

"Gloria?" he asked weakly, and Cicely realized that those eyes, for all their brilliancy, were dim.

"It's Cicely, Adrian dear."

"Cicely, how did you know of this?"

"I came to Philadelphia this afternoon and learned of it by chance. Are you in pain, dear, and can I help?"

"Cicely," he repeated, staring at her dazedly, "does she know yet?"

"Gloria? I cannot tell, dear. I came from Atlantic City, not New York."

3—Ains.

"I had a concert to-night," he murmured.

She clutched her throat to stifle the sob which rose.

"Do not worry, dear; they have only postponed it," she muttered inanely.

"Postponed!" he gasped sharply, a cruel, hoarse rasping in his throat. "Cicely, my arm, my arm!"

"Darling, it is so slight. The nurse told me so."

"Did she truly?"

"She made light of it," said Cicely grimly.

"Oh, thank God! I thought I was done for. I can't move my fingers. Is that natural?"

"Why, surely, dear, at first! It must be."

"If it were paralyzed——"

"Oh, hush, dear!" she cried quickly. "Really it can't be much."

"The nurse said that?" he asked eagerly. "But even a simple fracture would take a month to heal, and then I would have to practice to gain strength. Bed is weakening, they say. I don't want to get weak. Help me sit up."

"Not now, dear," she begged.

"Please, I want to!"

He tried to move, and she reached out to restrain him, but he did not need her intervention. His face grew even whiter and his eyes swam. For some seconds he lay breathing raucously through his nose, and his set, blue lips were agonizing to behold.

"Adrian darling!" cried Cicely softly.

"What is it?" he asked with piteous, brutelike bewilderment.

"You are terribly bruised, that is all."

He closed his eyes and remained silent while she bowed her lips suddenly to his uninjured hand. For some time they remained thus and, at last, believing he had dozed off, she raised her head to look at him. His eyes were open and fastened on her, unfathom-

ably black, with scarcely any iris, terrifying eyes.

"Adrian," she whispered, "what is the matter?"

He looked away from her.

"Gloria," he said faintly.

"If she has not been sent for, I shall do it myself, this very minute, if you wish. Can you tell me her telephone number?" She rose resolutely. Gloria was no longer a rival, but an accomplice, a comrade in the fight against death; or rather, she was not even a woman now, but a remedy. Cicely would have gone to the ends of the earth to find that remedy.

"No." He shook his head weakly, and she did not understand.

"You cannot remember her number? Of course not, after such a shock. How stupid of me not to think!"

"No," he repeated, distressed. "It's not that. Sit down, Cicely."

She obeyed him, with a puzzled face.

"You don't want me to telephone?"

"Wait, not yet. I must speak with you."

"With me, dear?" She flushed, ashamed of the warmth which ran through her at this shutting out of the woman she believed she regarded as a comrade in arms.

"Cicely—this"—he motioned feebly to his chest and shoulder—"this is not a bruise."

"Yes, dear."

"I wonder. Suppose—suppose it is something worse—something very bad. Suppose—my back——"

"Oh, no, dear, no!"

"Tell me the truth, Cicely. I must know!"

"The nurse did not mention your back and surely she would have done so if there had been something wrong. Dearest, if your ribs had been hurt, you would suffer like this and it need be nothing very dangerous."

He smiled weakly.

"You are a comfort, Cicely."

"Adrian! Don't!" She bit her lips and held in check her sharp desire to weep outright. "Dear," she went on, mastering herself, "you must not be nervous."

"Yes, I suppose I am nervous. It's a silly thing for a man, isn't it? Some day we'll laugh over it together. Cicely, can you find the doctor who—who patched me up and ask him to be—explicit about me?"

"If you wish, dear, I'll try."

"I do wish. Then I want you to telephone to Gloria as you suggested."

"Yes, dear."

"Tell her not to come on here. I shall be back in New York in a day or two, in time—in time for our wedding."

"Yes, dear. But have you thought—the doctor may say you are not to be moved so soon? Even if it is not serious that could be."

"Yes." A wave of pain cut off his speech and caused him to grip her hand tightly.

"Shall I go now, dear?" she asked when the tremor had passed. She noted with horror the beads of sweat upon his face.

"No; wait. One moment. Cicely, if—if—the doctor says I am—worse than we think— If—if—Cicely—if he says—I—I cannot play as—as I used to play— Concert pitch—you know——" He smiled tragically.

"Oh, but he won't say that!" she interrupted swiftly.

"No, but if—if you see he means it, then there is a special message for—Gloria." He drew himself together for the effort of its delivery. "Tell her—our—our engagement—is broken," he said.

## CHAPTER XII.

The surgeon who had, in Adrian's own words, "patched him up," had left the hospital. After some delay and difficulty Cicely found his assistant, a young interne with an irritating air of

being conscious of his own strict conformity with hospital régime.

"I can't say," was his unenlightening report. "The operation was an unusually brilliant one"—his face glowed for a moment, then regained its wooden expression—"but, of course, no one can say anything about results yet. I'm sure Doctor Varril would not want me to discuss it at all."

"I'm not asking you to discuss it and I could not understand you if you did," interrupted Cicely impatiently. "The important thing to us is whether he will recover and how soon. Can't you see? This is Adrian Valdebar, the pianist. Have you never heard of him?"

"Why, yes. Yes I have, although I'm sorry I've never heard him play," deprecated the young surgeon.

"Surely you must be able to guess at the state of mind of a man robbed of his means of expression. Yes, and his means of living."

"Surely he was highly insured against such an accident, wasn't he? Most musicians are," comforted the surgeon.

"I suppose so," said Cicely helplessly. "And it wouldn't matter, after all," she thought. "I've enough for both of us. But," she added aloud, in one last desperate attempt, "would only the economic side trouble you, if it had been you?"

"It's extremely unfortunate, but nothing I can say to you can help until we all know more about the case. Doctor Varril is a remarkable surgeon and he has had some incredible recoveries. This was an extraordinarily difficult case. There, I've said more than I intended. Doctor Varril expects to be back in an hour or so. Suppose I let you know when he comes in and you can communicate directly with him. He can telephone you, if you go home. What is your number?" He prepared to write it down.

"Thank you, but I expect to remain

here," said Cicely wearily. She realized that he had tried to be kind and she had no chance to learn more because of his firm intention to keep his own counsel.

She decided to telephone to Gloria although she had only this vague message to deliver.

"I shall nurse no false hopes in her," she mused.

When she made the connection with the Sanfreds it was to learn that some one, most likely Russell, had informed Gloria of the accident more than two hours ago, and the girl had instantly started for Philadelphia with her mother.

As she put up the receiver, Cicely's hand trembled. A depression descended upon her and, for the first time, she realized that she had been living in a state of mind which had as much and perhaps more of hope in it than despair, selfish hope, hope at the expense of the happiness of one she loved.

She wanted Adrian to have to break his engagement even if it cost him his career.

She fled from the telephone booth where this realization had come to her, as if she were fleeing from the idea itself.

"Am I as wicked as that?" she shuddered.

She took no further time to indulge in self-accusation or self-disgust. There was one thing to be done now, to make Adrian happy with the news that Gloria was on her way to him.

She found Adrian dozing. A nurse softly motioned her to a chair near the bed. The concern for her that she saw on the nurse's face, as the latter left her alone in the room, comforted her and gave her the right to be here. She felt she bore a kinship to all nurses, herself, and she smiled that once this had embittered her. Maybe her five years beside James Bannard's bedside



was only an apprenticeship arranged by Fate to prepare her for her real work, her care of Adrian Valdebar. Life took on a splendid unity at the thought; her sacrifice became a reward.

She caught herself up. The thought from which she had fled in such shame had now taken possession of her. It was no longer horrible.

"One must face facts," she told herself. "Am I wicked—or am I merely human to be glad my love is returned to me? Selfish? Perhaps. But my devotion will make up for that. Adrian, my Adrian, you are safer with me, although you may think only of the deprivations which have thrown you into this shelter. If only one of us can be completely happy! Why should I cry aloud against God's judgment when I discover He has chosen that it shall be I?"

Again she drew back, startled at her own self-revelations. "Completely happy." Could she consider herself "completely happy" when Adrian was so desperately hurt?

She gazed long at him as he lay there before her. Could she believe, could she desire to believe a beneficent power had crushed him like this for her sake? There was something pathetically gallant and dignified in his outstretched form, quiet and white-swathed.

"I was sacrificed. Now it is his turn," she thought grimly, and again she was startled by her likeness to James Bannard, she and he, each the possessor of a victim.

"No; it's different. He never loved as I do! But who am I to pose as above the average? I thought it was his career I cared most for, the substitute for mine, the future that was to stand in place of the future of any child of mine. I even thought I wanted to help the world through him. I had fine names and symbols for this longing in my heart. But it has only to do with him, his hands, his eyes, his

thoughts, his beating heart. Adrian, Adrian Valdebar, my only love!"

The nurse appeared at the door.

"There are some people downstairs who wish to come up. A young lady who says she is his betrothed. Will you go down and speak to them? I said you were here. It would be best not to have any one else come up to-night until Doctor Varril sees him."

"Yes, I'll go down."

Gloria had come.

Cicely was astonished at the serenity with which she received this news and she went down to the reception room uplifted with a sensation she did not recognize as triumphant malice.

Mrs. Sanfred sat on the stiff sofa, a dignified, richly and stylishly clad figure, the apotheosis of elegance in spite of the agitating circumstances of her presence. Gloria was standing quietly at the window and she turned with that grace of movement which made her gestures perfect to the verge of theatrical. Cicely paused in the doorway and, for a moment, it was as if a veil was lifted and all saw each other clearly, harshly, hostilely, with no softening cloak of reticence or courtesy.

"Ah," said Gloria in her lovely, bell-like voice, "you are here, Mrs. Bannard! How did you get here first?"

"I came over to Philadelphia for the concert," said Cicely conversationally. It was absurd that they should be discussing this. "I heard of—of this—purely by chance."

"Have you met my mother? Mamma, Mrs. Bannard was once Adrian's closest friend," introduced Gloria calmly. "Is he badly hurt?"

"Yes," answered Cicely brutally.

"Oh!" Gloria caught her breath and bowed her head a moment, then straightened resolutely. "Not—fatally. Mr. Russell—said, over the telephone, that he—would—not—"

"Is he in immediate danger?" demanded Mrs. Sanfred.

"No. He will live. They seem to be agreed on that. But a simple broken arm would be 'badly hurt' for him," said Cicely bluntly.

"You mean to say, as a musician, it would be fatal to him?" asked Mrs. Sanfred, while Gloria stood silent with her fine eyes steadily fixed on Cicely's face.

"I mean just that."

"Pianists have broken their hands and arms and recovered and gone back to the stage," said Mrs. Sanfred. "Haven't they?"

Cicely shrugged.

"I want to go up to him," said Gloria.

"You may not until the doctor gives permission. He was asleep when I left him."

"I am going to him," said Gloria peremptorily.

"Then you do not care whether or not you disturb him and make him worse?" asked Cicely.

"I must see him for myself. I want to be with him. He would want me to be with him." Gloria moved toward the door.

"Wait!" protested Cicely.

Gloria stopped and stared at her feebly, a gesture impertinent in one of her age to one of Cicely's, only that her beauty gave her majesty.

"Adrian has sent you a message," said Cicely hardly.

"And it is?"

"He releases you from your engagement."

"Why?"

"He realizes much that you do not, much that your mother will, and that I, most of all, can speak of with understanding. Miss Sanfred, he is no longer the Adrian Valdebar with whom you became infatuated at a concert, the popular idol all women envy you for having won. If he is able to play again, it will be a miracle. Suppose he has been made an invalid for life. Do you know what that would mean for you,

if you married him? Are you willing to give up the whole world to become merely his nurse? And he may be a more than usually exacting patient, a temperamental artist robbed of his métier. Can you—can you conceive of all this, can you dare to face it—accept it as your life?"

She felt, rather than saw, the approval of the woman on the sofa. Gloria herself stood near the door, drawn to her full height with a rigidity which made her appear even taller. Her eyes were steady, although her face was pale.

"What does it matter, all this?" she asked frigidly.

"You think your love for him could withstand it, then?"

"Neither is that the point. I do not know. Perhaps I do not love him. Perhaps, as you believe, it is only the musician, the applause, the glamour I love. I am as ignorant of what is going on inside me as you are. My thoughts and emotions are in turmoil. Do you suppose—you either, *maman*, that in those silent hours on the train I have not been searching my soul for the truth? I have, and I have not found it. What I found instead was this: Adrian is hurt and in trouble. He needs me now—not as I will be, not even as I am; no, nor even what he thinks me. But *what he wants to think me*. I am going to him in that rôle to help him and to cure him. The future can take care of itself."

### CHAPTER XIII.

An hour later Cicely paced the room at her hotel. She was fighting down the vision of Gloria sitting serene and beautiful at Adrian's bedside. That is how Adrian must see her as he woke. And she would be to him the angel she resembled. She would deliberately play that part to him. Did she really think she was doing it for his sake?

Was it not rather to satisfy her own sense of the effective, the lovely thing to do?

She was one of those happy, cool-headed, intelligent creatures who are always able to act in the manner best calculated to give them least regret afterward.

She was clever, brilliant, the mistress of herself completely. No need of worrying lest she should ever suffer. She could not. In a blaze of understanding, Cicely could see that if Gloria chose to marry Adrian, whether he recovered his prestige or not, she would contrive to make their lives successful and happy. He was safe with her, her stupendous sanity and self-satisfaction. She was of the lucky ones of earth.

The very necessity to admire her made Cicely hate her more. With youth and beauty and wealth, with her relentlessly fortunate disposition, she stood before the furnace of misfortune merely gaining a theatrical glory from its glare.

"Adrian will, after all, be only a background to her, whether he dies romantically in her arms or recovers completely to bring new laurels to lay at her feet. And he'll be glad to be her background. He will be happy with so little, he who should have, who could have had, so much."

She strode to a mirror and stared long at her haggard face and the gray streak above her temple.

"What am I doing on this earth, who have lived my time and bungled my living? I have neither courage nor power. My chance came and I turned from it with a scruple. Doctor Calshaw is right. I am only a projected shadow of something I was, the long shadow of sunset whose longing is to be blotted out by night." She dropped her face into her hands, racked by sobs. "Adrian, if only you needed me! I do not ask for your love."

She quieted down after a moment and tried to plan what she would do. She had left word at the hospital that she should be notified when Doctor Varril got there. If he had favorable news for her, she decided she would leave for New York to-morrow. If not, she was undecided what to do. It galled her to think of having to wait around for permission to stand at the bedside of her beloved.

"She would grant me permission. She would play fair. She would always play fair. It is the only becoming and beautiful way to act," she muttered bitterly.

The telephone rang, and she hastened to answer it. But the message was that there was a gentleman calling to see her who did not wish to disturb her if she had gone to bed. His name was Anton Perregaux. Anton, here! She glanced at her wrist watch. It was barely nine o'clock. She had lost all track of time since hearing of Adrian's accident at five o'clock that afternoon.

"Tell him I will be down. I'll meet him in the reception room."

He came toward her with great compassion darkening the blue of his eyes and he led her to a secluded corner of the big room.

"You have heard?" she asked. He nodded. "How?"

"Strangely. I went to Atlantic City this afternoon to spend the week-end, hoping I might see you there and find out how you were getting on. When I made inquiries at your hotel, they told me you had gone to Philadelphia for the recital to-night. I was disappointed and then I made up my mind, perhaps impertinently, to pursue you. All the way here I planned surprising you in the concert hall. When I reached the hall and asked for tickets I learned what had happened. Ah, my poor Cicely!"

"Anton," she said huskily. "Go on. Then what? What time was that?"

"About seven. I went to the hospital. There I learned that you were with him."

"Yes. How did you know I had not stayed."

"I tried to get some dinner, but could not eat. They had been unable to give me a report about poor Adrian. And my mind, dear one, was with your distress. I went back to the hospital a little after eight and learned that Miss Sanfred was with him and you had gone."

"That was quite natural, wasn't it?"

"So I argued with myself. Of course. They allow but one to be with him. Still——" he shrugged. "Forgive me, child; I wondered——"

"Yes; you wondered?"

"I had come to see you. I could not go back to Atlantic City without. I could not sleep thinking! Ah, my Cicely!"

"Don't, Anton, don't! Am I the one to pity while Adrian is lying there between life and death?" she gasped.

"He is not suffering as you are suffering for him," he answered simply.

"How do you know—how do you dare!" She tried to withdraw into herself, to hide the secret of her soul, but his eyes bored through her with a piercing light she did not at first understand. He leaned forward and grasped her hand.

"I know, Cicely. I dare because I, too, am suffering for my beloved," he said clearly.

Cicely seemed to freeze into stone in the silence which followed and grew so intense that his words by contrast appeared to have been shouted at her across a great chasm. She found she was staring at him, held by the blazing hunger in his eyes, the triumphant agony of unrequited love at last declared.

"No, Anton, not you! You are so calm, so—so—far removed——" she

whispered at last, still motionless like one hypnotized.

"You mean 'so old,' he prompted gently.

"Old! I am older than you!" she cried hysterically, releasing her hand.

"Have you the right to say that without knowing what has gone on here?" He touched his breast. His voice, so smooth and even, fascinated her. The fire had gone from his eyes and taken with it all semblance of youth from his face. Its ruddiness, too, had faded. It was as if, at will, he had assumed a mask of age.

"For how long?" she asked, awed.

"Seventeen years."

"Since before—— Oh, no; that could not be!"

"Since before you married James Bannard, yes."

She stared into the past with this key and saw her life as a strange new story. So many things were accounted for—his shyness, his enthusiasm, his contentment without success, aye, even his decreasing visits to her, his absence from her wedding, which he had put to the shabbiness of his clothes and his dread of smart people, his interest in her return, his glad look on the dock, even the trivial remark of his, "an artist should marry an artist," that had so rung in her ears, applying to but one couple in her mind.

"I have been very blind," she murmured.

"No. I have been very discreet. To-morrow I shall be sorry I was not more discreet to-night. But to-night I felt even that secret of mine is yours to help you through your grief."

"It does help," she said, wondering. "Oh, my dear, wise Anton, tell me why! What horrible sort of woman am I who require the anguish of another to help me? It comforts me to know you, too, are in pain. Why, why?"

"It is good to think of others in our

troubles. It relieves our own pressure." He smiled bleakly.

"But in this case, Anton, you must believe me, I cannot help you. I cannot even give you any hope. Surely you know that," she said.

"Yes; I have known it seventeen years," he answered somberly. And then he added quaintly, "But I cannot stop hoping."

"And you want me to?" she demanded.

"No," He shook his head. "No, my child. You will never outlive it. But you are an artist; you must use it. The good Lord gave me the artist's perceptions, the artist's soul, but repented and gave me the hands of a mechanic. I watch others and try to build in them what I had no material to build in me. You were one of those I had such dear hopes for. You were nearer to what my spirit wanted for its help than any one I have ever known. That was what first bound you to me. Later the foolishness was added, the dread; the—the hope that cannot live and will not die. Then, seven years ago, I saw you begin to do what I had done. Cherish in another the sacred flame that belonged, by right, to you. With me, I had no lamp; I had to borrow. With you, dearest, it hurt to see you use something inferior to what you legitimately possessed.

"Cicely, I am not speaking now as a lover. You have genius. It is not atrophied. It is richened. I heard you play the 'Appassionata' the other night, and if I doubted for a moment, the doubt vanished then. Raise your face, my child, and make a gift to the world of all you have learned and gathered *de profundis*. You have no right to be burned out. You have life in your grasp, and health and youth. My dear, my dear! Who of us is happy? So very few, and for so short a time! Those who have love, wealth, success—do they not want more? If they strive,

there is discontent back of the striving. If they cease to strive, they stagnate. This is so old, this philosophy. We can only reach happiness by ceasing to want it. How can we do that? I think only it comes when we take up life and embroider it for others and for ourselves with the little joys we are permitted, the rich threads which are in our hands. You have so much with which to decorate your corner! I talk a lot and all the time I only say one thing, like the futile, tiresome, old man I am. Forgive me," he stammered, and grew silent.

"No, dear, kind Anton," she said at last, "it is you who must forgive me. I have heard you and seem to understand you, but it is as if you were speaking to some one over whom I have no control." She sat up starkly, for the sound of a boy paging some one met her ear. "That is for me, I am sure. It is from the hospital."

"Telephone for Mrs. Bannard," said the boy, drawing nearer.

"Wait for me here. I will bring you the news," she said, and followed the boy.

She was startled to hear Gloria's voice, clear and well modulated.

"I wanted to tell you the good news myself," said Gloria. "Doctor Varril gives great hope for Adrian's complete recovery."

"I'm glad," whispered Cicely almost inaudibly.

"I want to share my happiness with his best friend," pursued Gloria. "We shall be married, as we planned, next week."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

As Cicely made her way back to the reception room where Anton Perre-gaux awaited her, she was conscious of a feeling of peace, unaccountable to her.

"I have been purged of hope," she thought. "I feel as if Adrian were



dead—no, as if I were dead and could no longer envy. I could pray never to be resurrected."

Anton Perregaax was coming toward her. She saw him as if for the first time, knowing the secret behind his timid, eager look, the very hesitation in his walk. She pitied him that he, too, was not dead and at rest as she was.

"He is going to get well," she said simply; "and the wedding is not to be postponed."

"You are content, then," stated Anton.

"Yes," she said slowly, "I suppose I am. But why? If he is really well, or will be, nothing has changed since this morning."

"Perhaps you love him more than you know," he suggested oddly.

When he had gone and she had retired to her room to wait for Gloria, who had said she would stop on her way from the hospital, which closed at ten o'clock, she found herself thinking less of Adrian than of Anton. She pictured his ruddy, wholesome, unromantic face and reflected how she had envied him his fifty years of serenity. Above all, it seemed strange that it was because of her he suffered, yet she could not raise a hand to heal him.

"I could try to do as he begs me—take up my work," she mused. The thought wearied her. Why, why, why?

At last Gloria came in. She was alone, having sent her mother to their rooms, and Cicely felt her heart leap with excitement, a dread of the interview and fear of this remarkable and terrible girl.

Gloria was in the traveling suit and furs she had worn at the hospital, her bright hair hidden under the close-fitting hat. She stood a moment watching Cicely in a manner at once simple and mysterious.

"I left him sleeping," she began conventionally. "He is in less pain and his mind is at rest."

"Yes," said Cicely, and was unable to go on.

"Mine is, too," continued Gloria.

"Doctor Varril's report was so satisfactory?"

"Satisfactory enough. Mine was, wholly."

"Your report?" Cicely looked at her stupidly.

"Of my heart."

"I do not understand you."

Gloria smiled. She threw back her head and the light played on her face fully and in the melting radiance of her eyes. She was very beautiful.

"Cicely Bannard," she said, "I love him as much as you love him and he has chosen me. I am sorry for you and can do nothing to help you, but this. I can assure you I am not marrying the artist or the acclaim. I am marrying Adrian Valdebar."

"Would you marry him if you had heard there were a chance that he would never play again?" demanded Cicely.

"I have heard it," answered Gloria.

"What! You said over the telephone——" Cicely felt herself stagger, her lips grow cold. "You don't mean—that—since——"

"Over the telephone and to every one except you and me, he will completely recover. Maybe—who knows? Perhaps he will."

Cicely sat down limply, staring before her. Adrian, crippled, after all! Then she realized the full enormity of having wanted this to happen.

Gloria's hands gently touched her on either shoulder.

"Mrs. Bannard," she begged sharply, "don't!"

Cicely stared at the girl's face, which had grown white and set as Gloria turned away.

"What is the truth?" asked Cicely.

"Nobody knows."

"You mean they are still uncertain?"

"Yes."

"Oh, why have you persisted in torturing me?" cried Cicely passionately. "Haven't you enough? Must you be wantonly cruel? Oh, aren't you afraid that some day it may be your turn?"

"I did not mean to be cruel," said Gloria thoughtfully. "Not to-night. To-night I am fond of you. My fear of you has vanished. Perhaps you are afraid of me. Why? Look at me closely. I love him; I shall make him happy."

"You think that will console me?" cried Cicely ironically.

"I think it would console me if he had chosen you," said Gloria.

"Yet you believe you love him?"

"More than my own happiness."

"You are clever," said Cicely, exasperated. "I do not know how to take you. You dazzle me."

Gloria began deliberately to pull off her gloves, without answering. The insignificant action seemed portentous and incomprehensible to Cicely. She drew herself together and tried to bring herself back to the commonplace.

"I have offended you. Consider it only the result of my upset nerves," she said apologetically. "I have not been well lately."

"I suppose we're both overwrought," said Gloria, drawing the gloves through her hand with a rhythmic movement which seemed to soothe her. "It took courage for me to come here. I was afraid this—this would result in misunderstanding. But I was determined to try to keep it clear. I did not count enough on your distrust."

"Why did you come, then?"

"To make you my friend."

"Ah, do you demand that of fortune, too?"

"You think it selfish of me?"

"We all want to be liked, especially by our rivals. It is a conquest."

"You are keen. That is the truth. But do you see nothing in my approach but that?" demanded Gloria gently.

Cicely was silent. Gloria turned to the door.

"Good-night," she said.

"Good-night," echoed Cicely dead-ly.

Gloria stood for a moment with her hand on the doorknob; then impetuously she came back to Cicely.

"I cannot leave you like this. Is it not something to you that I cannot be happy in the sight of your misery?"

"What should it mean to me?"

"That to me you are a part of him," Gloria explained at last. Cicely lifted her brows, and Gloria went on in haste. "Do not misinterpret. I was jealous of you, frightfully jealous of this very something that makes me want to win you now, this part of him in you. I cannot feel I have full right to him without it."

"In other words," Cicely replied with a grim smile, "you want his past as well as his future."

"Do I? Perhaps. But it is in order to understand fully how to go about giving him his happiness. Yes, I want to know you for that. And for more. You are truly his friend. You are as close to him as a mother. I do not want to shut you from his life."

"Are you only thinking of him, and not of your own comfort or triumph?" asked Cicely crudely.

"Yes."

"How can you be so sure when barely two hours ago you said you did not know whether you loved him or whether you intended to marry him or not? When you declared you were going to act a part to him? Have I not the right to doubt your sincerity?"

"Can you when you remember my motive? I did not know then, but it's clear to me now. That was the solution of all my doubts, that determination to act for Adrian's own good. I was so unsure until I saw him. I did not realize what would have been my loss if he had died. I thought it might have been my romance or even self-

respect because I might not sufficiently feel the loss. But when I saw him, I knew. It was nothing so complicated. It was just Adrian." Her big eyes filled with tears and her face flushed as she went on, with a touch of anger in her voice. "Up till then I had been thinking in terms of myself. When I saw him I ceased to. At his bedside I made my marriage vow, before he spoke or could hear me, to cherish him always, to serve, to help, to dedicate myself to him. I thought as I did so it would fill me with fear and awe, like a promised retribution for some unwitting wrong I had done him. But what I felt was exultation only."

"Exaltation is transitory."

"Exaltation? Yes, that, too. The word I used was exultation. Joy, unbounded joy."

"Because you were doing your duty?"

"No. Because for the first time I understood what you perhaps have forgotten."

"What is that?" asked Cicely curiously.

"What love is."

"I would give everything in life for him."

Gloria looked at her a moment.

"That," she said strangely, "is what you cannot seem to do." She walked slowly again to the door. Here she stopped, looking back with great pity on her face. "Poor, poor Cicely Bannard!" she exclaimed.

She went out and Cicely stared after her. On her set face dawned the expression of one suddenly awakened on the verge of a precipice.

## CHAPTER XV.

Two years later a little group was gathered together among the litter of teacups, newspapers, and cigarettes in Cicely's library. They had been discussing the criticism of Adrian Valde-

bar's return recital which had taken place the night before.

Adrian sat on the big sofa beside his wife, who leaned affectionately against him. She was much the same Gloria as formerly, with her beautiful gold hair and her artistically fashioned dress. Adrian was older looking, heavier, with placid lines about his eyes. Near these two was Anton Perregaux, still busy arranging the long, awkward clippings they had cut from the newspapers. And in a chair opposite was Cicely, whose eyes roamed from one to the other, but mostly lingered upon Adrian.

Cicely had altered most of all. She seemed to have grown ten years younger, for her brown hair was innocent of gray and her dull-black attire had given way to a soft tea gown of green and bronze. About her eyes and mouth there were new lines, although her face was tranquil and even contented.

"It was really because they were glad to see me back," Adrian said lazily. "And, oh, the thrill of walking once more before them across the stage to a waiting piano!"

"But, Cicely," put in Gloria, "why, in all your instruction, did you never teach my husband to bow gracefully?"

"Cicely does it so well!" sighed Adrian with envy. "She's known for it, the Cicely-Oakworth acknowledgment. Gratified, but not grateful." He awkwardly attempted a majestically patronizing curve of his neck. "Like a swan," he supplemented.

"You look like a giraffe with arthritis," criticized Anton Perregaux. "I can tell you the secret of Cicely's gracefulness. None better."

"What is it?" asked Cicely, amused.

"She doesn't give a damn."

"Anton!"

"Did you take up music again to get applause? Did you want this fame? Did you slave six hours a day and

more, for two years, beginning where, as a young girl, you had left off, putting back into your arms and fingers the suppleness of youth to aid the knowledge of your years and experience, just to hear people make loud and tuneless noises with their hands when they saw you?"

"No, but I dyed my hair for them, Anton." Cicely smiled.

"No such thing; you did it for me," said Gloria. "Do you forget how I pleaded on my knees? And was I right, Adrian? Isn't she young all over again?"

"Her hair is," admitted Adrian. "And I suppose when a woman fixes up for people it implies some consideration for their opinion."

"People nothing. It was for me," said Gloria.

"You were the leader of the multitudes," replied Cicely. "You overcame my scruples, but I can't fool myself. I did it for them."

"Have it your own way," said Anton. "Your hair is not so successful as your music."

"What's the matter with it?" demanded Cicely alarmed, patting it as if she could see it through her finger tips.

"People do not applaud it," suggested Adrian.

"People do not set it as a standard of comparison for other heads of hair," corrected Anton, touching the newspapers beside him.

There was a little silence, which Gloria broke at last, frowning perplexedly.

"Anton, are you in earnest? Tell us the truth. Has Adrian improved?"

"Enormously. They are right, the critics."

"And all the little *matinée* idolatresses will come flocking after him again, even if he has a wife and a baby?" she continued.

"Thousands of them."

"I love to feel their envy. Oh, my

sweet Adrian, it was good of you to recover completely!"

"Oh, my sweet Gloria, it was good of you to make me!"

"And now," said Cicely pensively, "it is my cue to retire from public life again."

"What!" cried the others in chorus.

"Need I explain? Well, perhaps. Anton, you were quite wrong when you said you knew the secret of my coldly gracious bowing."

"Tell us, Cicely! We've got to teach Adrian," begged Gloria.

Cicely shook her head.

"It can't help him. I am merely taking his applause. I can therefore be proud and happy and yet aloof," she explained.

"How, taking my applause? I want to learn, then, how to swipe yours."

"No need to swipe. I'll bequeath it to you," said Cicely.

"Cicely, this is foolishness. What on earth do you mean?" broke in Anton impatiently.

"Gloria knows," said Cicely.

"You don't mean——" Gloria looked incredulous. "Adrian, remember the day after your accident, in the hospital? You asked for Cicely and I told you she had gone. You said you had a message for her and I wrote it to her for you. She has taken it literally!"

"What was it?" asked Anton.

"I told her to play again, to make up for my inability," said Adrian.

"The exact words were, 'Keep my place for me at the piano, till I come back,'" quoted Cicely. "Last night you came back."

"But it is not my place," protested Adrian. "Neither the public nor the critics will agree to that. If my return meant your retirement—oh, Cicely, they'd throw eggs at me!"

"That's silly, Adrian!" exclaimed Gloria. "Cicely is not so much superior to you. She'll think you're jealous, if you talk like that, and I

wouldn't blame her. Cicely, you may have started as a substitute for Adrian in the musical world, but you can't go on as such. You are the only Cicely Oakworth and I envy you till I'm blue in the face. On the stage only three months, and already with a name that packs Carnegie Hall. Don't you dare to talk of giving up! Oh, you couldn't!"

"It was harder to do his bidding when I had no heart for it," said Cicely. "Adrian, will you give me leave to withdraw?"

"No," forbade Adrian quickly. "My bidding is: keep it up."

"It means little to me," murmured Cicely.

"It means everything to you," corrected Anton.

There was a pause. Then Gloria left her husband's side and sat on the arm of Cicely's chair.

"I took up playing in earnest once, when I was jealous of you. Ellen Pierce and lots of people thought I played better than Adrian or Hoffman or Bauer or Paderewski. And I was quite sure they were right, or would be if I put in a solid month or two on practice. Do you know, Cicely, I'm not so sure I haven't *still* got a chance? Sometimes the desire to find out makes me perfectly unhappy. Sometimes, to get what you get, Cicely, that homage, that concentrated love and devotion of a thrilling crowd, eats into me like acid. Don't look at me like that, Adrian. I'm rather fond of baring my soul. I feel virtuous. And watch me bow! Anton, I ask you to judge impartially—isn't this as graceful as Cicely's?"

She went toward the piano, which was now upstairs for Cicely's more convenient practicing. Before she sat down, she bowed several times.

"The bow is perfect!" exclaimed Anton whole-heartedly. "No, do not begin to play!"

"There!" She rose from the piano with a little flush of pain. "I know I daren't touch the notes! Oh, Cicely, just now my envy and jealousy of you are raw and ugly like an open wound!"

She knelt before Cicely, her hands upon the older woman's knees.

"I know what is there." She touched Cicely's bosom lightly. "I know what you have paid. Not merely all those hours of practice. I understand Anton when he says you do not give a damn. But Cicely, Cicely, do not undervalue the joy you have bought with your suffering! Perhaps there is no joy like it, not even the possession of Adrian and little Gloria. No—no—she went on quickly as Cicely started to reply—"let me speak! Nobody has both, and all."

Gloria rose to her feet and stood looking down into Cicely's whimsical, upturned face. The eyes of the younger woman became dark and grave. For a moment she seemed older.

"No, Cicely," she said soberly, "we need have no fear. You can never give it up. It is your lifeblood flowing. We know it and they know it. You cannot stop it now. It would kill you. And I'll never envy you again. Only, I beg you, try to see that I could envy you, even I, the happy, the lucky—I could, and I did!"

She turned away and dismissed her gravity with a little laugh as she caught the earnest gaze of Anton Perregaux.

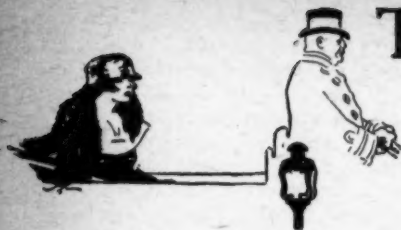
"How came you to be so wise, Gloria?" he asked.

"That is my secret, Anton. But I am not so wise as you. You are the happiest of us all. Tell me, how have you managed to school yourself to contentment? How did you learn never, never to reach for anything beyond your grasp?"

For a second his blue eyes stared back at her limpidly and inscrutably. His lips trembled in a smile.

"That is my secret, Gloria," he said.





# The Vanity Case

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

Author of "The Fool's Cap," "The One-Way Street," etc.



**G**LORIANNE TEAZEL was young, very young, when she came from a town in the Middle West and the doldrums of middling poverty to the Great Light Ways. One of those countless ephemeral creatures who come fluttering from everywhere to the light of a metropolis, seeking something, in search of something, Glorianne began her day with youth's touch of self-elation and beauty's superb frivolity.

Her niche at first was too trivial for record. To eke out a stipend insufficient for even her slenderness, she began to sit now and then for the commercial artists. Her popularity in this field was increasing when Miles Channing flung her face on many billboards throughout the city, in advertising a complexion soap. Channing had never done a better poster—a girl with her face tilted for any light to strike, delicately vivid coloring and insouciant contour of cheek, dark, teasing eyes, impudent nostrils, tantalizing mouth, long, curving throat which seemed a stem for the showy flower which was Glorianne Teazel's face.

"No wonder your tread slows in going by my soap poster!" said Channing, falling in step with her one day in the afternoon throngs. He had the worldling's way of dispensing with any formality of greeting.

Glorianne had the trick of investing any salutation with grace.

"How's the artist?" She was not an unworldly figure herself, in yellow cheviot, black furs, and wide-brimmed

hat wreathed with yellow roses. The face under her becoming headgear was a replica of the billboard beauty, and in itself an explanation of her slowed tread. "But I wasn't flirting with your poster down the block!" she laughed. "I was only postponing the sight of you."

Channing timed his step to hers.

"The sight of a dull post on the road you're traveling?" His smile could render irregular features whimsical.

"You're in posthaste to call yourself a dullard," ventured Glorianne. "You, of all people!"

A slight gesture of his hand refuted her implied compliment. Channing never seemed to value the rating which the world accorded him as an artist of note, a man with several languages at his command, and a polish gleaned from many ports. The very chic Glorianne was apt to be conscious of there being worlds afar, when talking to Channing. Even his silences gave her this feeling.

But, as they turned into the Avenue and became part of its pageant, she wondered if any portion of the globe boasted more varying life than Fifth Avenue in wintry weather. A multi-colored populace. Faces. Shoals of them! By-streets that seemed rivulets of life pouring into the longer thoroughfare, crossings which were cross currents of life, blocks blockaded by life, burnished motor cars and resplendent show windows, fine raiment, rags—elation, despair, youth, age,

apathy—— Glorianne walked beside Channing in the afternoon panorama.

"Would you like a cup of tea?" he asked her, at a corner in the middle-Thirties adorned by a tea place where the music was passable.

She nodded, acquiescent. There were mirrors the length of her on either side of the entrance. She saw herself, a dash of yellow, a flash of youth, in the mirrors as she passed them.

Within, fiddles, tables with gewgaw lamps, fashionables and demifashionables dawdling over teacups and cigarettes. Glorianne, of middling poverty, unfastened her chic collarette. A sigh with which she drew off gloves from hands whose loveliness was emphasized by elbow-length cuffs of black fur was youth's tribute to the aromas of the place, tea, perfumes of flowers and flowery women, cigarettes.

"But you'll tire of it all, of a sudden, like this!" said Miles Channing, cracking his lean fingers. "You'll want to get away, jump aboard a ship, and sail off anywhere."

Glorianne poured the tea.

She was soon lighting her cigarette, employing a trick she had acquired of blowing moons and breaking them with an idle finger tip. Her eyes, alight, were not so idle! The trick of flirtation had been one of her natal gifts.

"But you love it all, of a sudden, like this!" she laughed, volatile weed between her fingers. "You are glad to be here; to live and learn, anyhow."

Channing handled a cigarette in the Old World fashion.

"I wish you might never be saddened," he said to her, "as all of us are, sooner or later."

She shrugged.

"Some of us slip through. Fate is kind to some of us."

"A perilous illusion," he warned her. "Fate's a beldame to those who believe in her beneficence. The unwary are her victims."

"And the chary, maybe," laughed Glorianne, blowing a smoke moon across the table.

He put a finger through the vapory ring. His voice held its alien note, in swerving the conversation to a subject he rarely broached—himself. "I waylaid you to-day because I'm off to anywhere to-morrow, going away again. I want a word of good-by."

The cigarette lagged a bit in her fingers. He had painted a stunning poster of her, and had sometimes looked at her as he was looking now; as if she were a bright post on one of the roads he traveled.

"I like the words 'good luck' more than 'good-by,'" she said, smoking again.

"Say it as you like," he smiled. "It means a parting of the ways. A little pause before the ship sails."

She leveled her light glance on features capable of rousing in her something between pity and pleasure, something painful, perhaps.

"Where sails your ship?" she questioned, borrowing his phrasing.

"It knows," said Channing, "better than I do."

Her eyes sparkled.

"What sport to go off like that!"

"It's the only way to go. Travel pamphlets, tours, toggery—bah!" His laugh was mellowed by many climes. "God gives us the ocean to sail on, so we buy steamer rugs and secure passage on a water palace."

Glorianne refused to scorn civilization.

"Small chance we'd have in a birch-bark canoe!"

Yet she sat looking at the man who had posted her face throughout a town which seemed very large to her. She was not in love with the artist. She was enamored of herself, and existence in every phase had an allurements for her, stimulated her sense of being in the swim. Too, the vagrant throb

which all rovers inspire in the feminine breast was in her look at Channing.

He caught, it seemed, this awakening element in her regard of him. He sought to retain it for the moment by leaning forward, discarding any introduction to words easily uttered by those human birds of passage prone to call others to take wing with them.

"Will you take a chance with me, Gorianne? If I go sailing off, some day you'll marry. Maybe you'll love. Marry me, little beloved. Come! If my ring irks you, after a while you can drop it in some foreign pool. Don't stay just a vanity mirror and powder puff. Come! We will know the delights of roving till we tire."

It was only momentary, the call to go. It was like a sweep of gull wings against the wind, her senses tossed delicately against the winds of chance!

She flicked some ashes into her teacup. Her flight of words held scant poesy.

"I'm satisfied with this town, thank you! I'm not ready to ring off yet! And I'm not out for the sort of ring I'd want to drop in a foreign pool, and, like as not, follow, myself." With her laugh shallow enough to forget, musical enough to remember, she reached for gloves and coin purse of near-gold. "I'd half like to go with you, Channing. But I want to marry in this town I've come to. And—it's this way—I want a million or two." She rose, coloring somewhat brilliantly.

The way he came to his feet showed him a philosopher.

"I'm sorry."

"That I'm no better than the rest?" she asked, moving toward the mirrored exit.

As he held open a door for her, he said, smiling.

"Light lie the Fates upon thee!"

Outside the tea place where the fiddles were going it, they shook hands. Their parting was marked by a touch

of gay pity on her part, a tinge of compassion on his.

"Good-by, Glorianne."

"Good luck, Channing."

The crowds on the Avenue make any farewell merely an incident. Light are the Fates! You say good-by to one, and there are others in the swift-moving-currents of life at high tide.

## II.

Our little Glorianne was not destined to remain long in her unrecorded niche. Her face on the billboards brought her an offer from stagemod. An enterprising producer of topical revues was putting on "Town Advertisements—of 1921," and he naturally took a look at the model who had posed for the complexion-soap poster. He discovered in the Teazel beauty a piquant way of singing, an ability to dance a little, and the sort of face which brings the chappie populace to its patent-leathered feet. Glorianne was soon appearing behind the footlights. As a soapsuds girl, attired in a fluff of swansdown, she sang each night;

"Posters come and go like girlies;

Other suds, other duds

Take your eye by and by.

I'm the girl you stopped to look at,  
Just to-day, on Broadway."

On Broadway, the girl of to-day finds herself sought after by debonaire townsters ever ready to make play love to a face achieving quicksilver popularity. She seemed to meet a million men, but never a millionaire.

There cropped up among her new acquaintances a young lyric writer rather too good looking for a rhymester with a floating address and no dollar sign after his name. Jack Trade had idiosyncrasies enough to be a millionaire! He would hand a prodigal green-back to a taxi driver and miss his tip to a hat boy. In the game of flirtation, he was level-headed and inclined toward high-handed plays. When one of

his lyrics to the Teazel beauty evolved into a comedy with musical interpolations, Jack dashed her hopes of being featured in his "Lady Tease" by coolly telling Glorianne that the show had gone into rehearsal with a more seasoned singer.

She was piqued.

"Whose face inspired your star rôle?" she demanded gayly.

"Yours," replied young Trade with promptitude.

They had been dancing away at midnight, and were now going across town to her boarding place in a hansom cab. It was like Jack to fancy a horse-drawn cab for a night's frolic. In evening dress, top hat absurdly glossy against the shabby cushions of the cab, he appeared to enjoy the incongruity of a one-horse cab for a girl of the smartest revue in town. Jogs. A bottle-nosed cabby somewhere on high.

With characteristic candor, young Trade pursued the topic of his comedy.

"We're giving the part of 'Lady Tease' to a girl with a better voice than yours."

"Better looking?" queried Glorianne, resplendent in gown of gold tissue, hosiery of cobweb amber, cloak of mauve cloth wrapped about her.

"Better known," was Jack's retort, as he settled comfortably in the old cab. He continued, with a shadow shifting across his countenance, "Besides, the power behind this show is a fool. He believes in advancing those who advance themselves."

Her brows contracted. A vision of mauve and gold, scarlet beginning to mantle her cheeks, she looked ahead.

"Who is the power behind the production?" she asked at length.

Jack held up a warning finger.

"Nice maidens do not inquire about multimillionaires."

She laughed then. Young Trade was a nobody, not in the count, and the face she turned on him sparkled with

the brilliancy which least became her. But, in meeting his straight gaze, she was conscious of that stirred feeling which Channing had been able to produce in her momentarily and this younger man could evoke to an alarming extent.

She held his eyes with something of a challenge, taking refuge in light self-defense.

"Why shouldn't I go after the rôle of 'Lady Tease'? It's all in the game."

Trade had a face which shadowed readily despite its rather blooming contour.

"There are rules to even the show game. You wouldn't double deal?"

"I might," said Glorianne frankly.

"You'd go after another girl's chance?"

"If I thought I could get it."

"You'd make a steal?"

"It's all in the big city!" She shrugged.

"So it is." His gloom made him tremendously good looking. He slumped in the rusty cushions, hands in his pockets. "Good heavens, how can men tell what lies behind women's faces?" Then more bitterly he went on, "Want the name of the moneyed fool behind my 'Lady Tease'?"

Glorianne parried this.

"Oh, he'd probably laugh at my impudence in asking for the rôle."

"I doubt it," remarked young Trade dryly, turning his head to look at her. In an undertone he added: "Glory, Glorianne! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? With nothing more than that laugh of yours and that flitting promise in your eyes, you'd make a steal! Hasn't your species any idea above graft and greed, getting something for nothing, making for any spotlight, playing up to luckless chaps?" As the doors of the hansom opened in front of her boarding place, he vouchsafed the information she had asked for.

"The very rich guy behind the show," he said, "is Peter Boudinot, one of the Boudinots. He's a bounder, they say. His people are always berating him for the money he loses in the theaters."

The arching of her brows expressed contemplation.

For a moment nothing more was said and neither one made a movement to leave the cab. They regarded each other gravely, young Trade and Glorianne. Then he got out of the equipage, and she touched his hand in her fleet step down to the pavement. Under an arc light before the brownstone front which housed her, the young writer of lyrics bared his head. He was very good to look at, tall, well set up, with only a few lines sketched about his eyes, and an air of being from somewhere, though he was from nowhere. She was a creature to remember, gold tissue dress setting off her tints and curves. They were well matched. Their eyes unconsciously acknowledged it.

High over the battered street where they stood the first touch of dawn was stealing. It cast no roseate illumination upon them. The call of youth to youth was transient, faint.

Their good nights were cold.

Later, in her room, Glorianne smoked a quantity of cigarettes. In negligee, with her dark hair down and her white feet in satin mules, she blew smoke moons and pricked them with a finger. Presently, she reached for a writing pad, traced nothings with a pen, and began to write. Nonchalance was in the downcast face, the nostrils slightly dilated, the mouth compressed, the flawless skin evenly colored. When she had finished a few lines of self-laudation, she addressed the envelope to Peter Boudinot. She picked up a handglass and surveyed her face, saying mockingly, "Glory, Glorianne!" Then she ensconced herself in an easy-chair, put

a cushion behind her head, and glanced over the theatrical columns of an evening edition. She was yawning, when a name in print caught her attention.

She learned from a chance paragraph that Miles Channing, the artist, had returned from the West Indies and was down with a fever, dangerously ill, in the house he occupied during his sojourns in New York.

### III.

The news of Channing's illness came at an hour when Glorianne was traveling toward the unknown and when any familiar post along the way might seem a sign to halt. So, after mailing the letter to Peter Boudinot, millionaire, the next morning, and summarily dismissing from her mind any thought of young Trade standing bareheaded under an arc light, Glorianne purchased a lavish basket of fruit and took a subway train to the studio house, very far uptown, where Channing did his painting—a ramshackle structure on the river's edge, set on stilts and reached by a flight of steep steps.

It was a cloudy day, very cold, and the by-street running down to the river was a channel for the wind. She moved swiftly, a dashing figure in toque of peacock feathers and astrakhan cape lined with ocher satin. She was bent on nothing more momentous than a slight, effective tribute to a man whose fever might be painting pictures of her in various postures of vanity.

But at the artist's house, her steps were slowed by a fever placard on his door.

Armed with her showy basket of fruit, Glorianne paused at the steps of the house to which Channing had returned from one of his untethered rambles. His door was posted with a word to the world. There was a case of smallpox within. He had wandered back from strange places fruitful of



peril through weed and bloom, pestilential suns, torrid moons!

Glorianne Teazel knew little of plague and pestilence, nothing of the tragedies they brew, the changes they may bring about—with their swift drama, the pitiless instruments they are in the hands of the beldame, Fate.

Her first thought was of pity for Channing. Her second thought, an electrical one, was of the divers ways by which a young woman of the foot-lights may snatch the easily won laurels of sensationalism. Big type flashed before the shallows of her mind: "Glorianne Teazel, girl of '1921 Revue,' carries fruit to quarantined artist who once painted her." A neat heading for Peter Boudinot to peruse, opening his mail! Or for young Trade to digest over a cup of coffee in some noisy café. By such maneuvers new stars flare forth in the firmament of the town. A fitting anecdote for a "Lady Tease."

The impulse which carried her up the steps of Channing's house was no less volatile than the impetus which had propelled her from the Middle West and the middling poverty, to gamble with the Fates. Glorianne opened the door of the quarantined house and went in.

Familiar with the cold hall which led to the airy painting room on the river side of Channing's abode, she went as usual into the studio. The old feeling of there being worlds afar touched her like a soft brush of wings, as she placed the hamper of fruit on a table brightened by magazines and books of travel. The canvases, hung the length of whitewashed walls and between windows overlooking the river, were conglomerate as a rover's thoughts—an Etruscan wall, the face of Glorianne Teazel in laughter, a poster advertising a root drink, a street scene in Central America, Glorianne in dreamy mood. She had not realized until to-day that

every second or third canvas in Channing's studio was of herself!

Several cigarettes filled an interim of waiting for some one to pass through the hall. She would not go away without asking how the poor fellow was. At length, the figure of a Bon Secours nursing sister on the threshold, and Glorianne throwing aside her cigarette to make inquiries concerning her friend.

Fate has scant appreciation of our pretty mental pictures or of our compassionate twinges. In the familiar bare-swept studio above the river, gray with northern light, Glorianne learned from the Bon Secours sister that the city regulations guarding public health make it easier to enter than to leave a house under quarantine.

She did not appreciate for a moment the trick Fate had turned on her.

Careless of any public save the one played to for applause, sure of her luck, confident of an ability to magnetize even the Destinies, she found herself unready to admit that in throwing for a titillating sensation she had taken no thought of consequences. She had not stopped to reflect that once within a quarantined house she would be forbidden to leave it until the ban were lifted! There was a touch of haste in the way she took a cigarette from a gold case dangling at her wrist.

The Teazel beauty struck a match. To her, the town had seemed an ungoverned pleasure spot. The governing powers behind it, its underlying gravity, now made her twirl the tiny flame of a match and ignite her cigarette rather slowly. A presence more familiar with death and prayer than the defiant young follies of Broadway did not lessen her sense of contact with immutability, her tweak of self-consternation on finding herself a temporary prisoner here, under a city law. Yet those attuned to the city acquire a certain philosophy in any situation, no matter how untoward.

Glorianne blew a quick moon of smoke toward a canvas of herself.

Thus, circumstance led her into becoming a transient inhabitant of the painting quarters on the river side of Channing's house. And from the Light Ways an ephemeral beauty on the brink of her heyday vanished like a speck of prismatic dust.

Banished temporarily, Glorianne found it something of an experience to while away hours with books on art and travel, to notice how a river changes each day, to admire her face on many canvases, and to wonder whether the poor fellow now babbling in fever through the nights had really loved her. Experimental, too, to wonder why nobody looked her up. Was it that posters and girlies came and went in such numbers that they were not in the count for longer than a day? Young Trade, the people of her show, a score of others—nobody cared.

Yet somebody cared, some.

More than once Glorianne heard Miles Channing call her name in his delirium, as one speaks to a little beloved. For the most part the artist rattled of Columbines, of speckled Italian lizards, of a parrot's cry in the tropics, of firefly flames on the Appian Way, of absinth, and spring water, and God. The night she knew he was dying, and heard him calling for her, though unconscious of her proximity, she proved some of her impulses glorious by impetuously sweeping to Channing's bedside.

An experience—to look on a man's wasted face and learn what loneliness was! The touch of her hand seemed little enough!

Miles Channing died that night.

Afterward, she was restive to get back to the old life, to forget how people forgot, how men go wandering over the globe till they tire, how women in solitude tire of themselves. Glory! She'd be glad to get back!

But before the quarantine was removed and she was free to go the Bon Secours sister had new nursing duties in the house on the river's edge, for Glorianne herself fell ill of the dread disease.

"Light lie the Fates upon thee," Channing had said, smiling, as he opened a door for her.

#### IV.

Many weeks later Glorianne was well enough to know she had been through a blank period.

She was told that Miles Channing, before going off on his last ramble, had quixotically willed his possessions to the girl whom he had asked to rove a while with him; his canvases, surplus in bank, and ramshackle house very far uptown had been left to Glorianne Teazel.

She needed money in her hands just then, for she had been ill in the house on the river's edge. How ill, she did not learn until the day she asked the Bon Secours sister for a hand mirror. Glorianne lay very still on her couch in the big studio full of northern light. Her beauty had been posted throughout the town! She had planned to win millions with it. Rhymesters had penned lyrics to it! And now the beauty looked toward the window, the river. Through an impulse to attract more attention to herself, a silly throw for sensationalism, she had lost.

She had lost!

In the vernacular of the town, the Fates had handed her one.

She was plucky enough to face the mirror. The fever had refined her features; her eyes appeared darker, her mouth was less capricious, her hair had been sheared, but was beginning to grow again, curly, with copper glints, her throat was thin as a child's, her arms, too, childishly thin. In a slight panic of self-inspection, she studied

several infinitesimal blemishes, traces of her illness. In a town brimming each season with a fresh quota of vain-glorious youth, any diminution in a professional beauty may spell oblivion.

Glorianne, letting the mirror tumble face down, delicately cursed her fate.

Then a gayety of despair seized upon her. One must bluff it out. Laugh! It was gambler's luck. She could still go back. She was a type, thin as a splinter, curly-haired, soulful-eyed. Not yet twenty. A type, no longer a tease! Her hands closed in fists, and then the fingers flung out, filching a touch of fatalism from a friend now under the sod and through with it all. Go back she would. She was not through. She was young! And the Great Light Ways were her ways!

A moment of concentration recalled to her rallying faculties a dancer into whose young-face a jealous danseuse had flung some acid. A scurrying trip to a costly face specialist and a sojourn in a renowned milk sanatorium had resulted in a triumphal return. The dancer had come back strong. Glorianne reached out a spiritualized hand for the bank book that had belonged to Channing. An artist's surplus! She grimaced and looked about his studio, but she could not bring herself to think of turning the poor fellow's canvases into the money she needed. How about selling this house on the river's edge? A real-estate agent would list it, and she would grow older waiting for its purchaser. What she needed was a friend, alive, who might hustle some townster into acquiring a piece of property cheap. She needed a friend.

And she broke the mirror with a desolate fling of her thin arm.

Yet, a few weeks later, when the house on the river's edge was no longer posted as a symbol of tragedy, Glorianne rang up several telephone numbers in an effort to locate Jack Trade.

She could not find the lyric writer in any of his haunts—Broadway hostelries, dramatists' guilds, or gilded clubs. She tried writing to these addresses, a line asking him to give her a telephone ring. There ensued a span wherein she came to understand how, in the big city, youth unconsciously clings to youth, turns to it when in need, and suffers intolerably on finding the frail affinity broken.

But after a while, young Trade did ring up the number she had given him. His voice was good to hear.

"Hel-lo! You in town again? Where did you speed to—Lady Tease?"

A glint in her cadence, a tilt.

"Where have you been, rhymester? I've been ringing you everywhere."

"Not everywhere, or your voice would have reached me before your letters. They were forwarded to me."

She was curious as to his whereabouts.

"Forwarded?"

"Yes." He laughed. "To where I am—it isn't Broadway any longer."

She essayed her first laugh in weeks, a trifle wabbly.

"You haven't cut out the show game?"

"It was time to. You see, in the middle of rehearsing my teasing-comedy our millionaire walked off, withdrew his financial support. Everything flunked. I withdrew." Less flippancy in his tone, something more than interest, if shadowed with reserves. "Are you still out for the steal—the rôle of my 'Lady Tease'?"

An inflection in her voice covered any self-uncertainty.

"I wrote to Peter Boudinot," said she. "Perhaps he liked my letter well enough to put off the production of your comedy."

"Perhaps," he answered dryly. Then, less eagerly, "I thought maybe you'd given up the game yourself; gone

home, to what sylvan glade you came from. Where've you been, Glorianne?"

She meant to say with levity, "What do you care? Like as not I've been in an aeroplane, sporting along the Milky Way." What she said, rather slowly, was:

"I've been ill. I've been close to death. I—need you! Come." And she gave him the address.

"I'll be there at once, Glorianne."

And the response, after a period touching desolation, made her lean for a moment against the telephone stand in the great gray studio. He cared enough to be concerned! To come! But, then, he thought he was seeking the old Glorianne Teazel, not this thin, panicky shadow being, on the river's edge.

She spent the moments by a window open to the river wind, unsure of what was coming her way, of the man who was speeding uptown to her, in the inevitable hot-haste taxicab patronized by those in ardent pursuit of beauty.

## V.

Young Trade came sooner even than she had expected.

In the big studio full of wind from the river, she forgot herself enough to sweep forward with outflung hands.

"It's good to see somebody again!" she cried in a flare of emotion which surprised her.

Then she found herself conscious of Jack's stare. And of herself! Of the northern light full upon her, the sharp, graceful angles of her, the slightly sunken line of her cheek, her face, without a trace of paint or powder. She put her hands to her hair.

"Bobbed," she said, summoning bravado.

His look left her for Channing's canvases, many of them picturing her in postures of elusive youth. His face shadowed perceptibly.

She put a finger against her lips,

looking the width of the place at the soap-suds poster, which glowed vividly as if the brush had just put the final stroke on it. Herself, as the girl Broadway had stopped to look at! Her finger bruised her lips.

Then her gaze fell and her eyes closed for a second.

"You see——" She paused.

In the pause Jack turned away. He walked to the open window, stood there in silence.

His outline was limned against the quick-running river—well-shaped head, likable shoulders, lithe thighs, young height. The way his hair grew, the set of his coat—these little things. He had always been attractive to her. In the light of an experience which had embraced the witnessing of death, she had perhaps subconsciously weakened to the call of natural emotions, for, of a sudden, she longed to run across these bare-swept boards where she had played before no public in her own drama and, a creature affrighted, cling to the tall young man, beg him not to turn his back on her as if she had lost out, as if she had lost the ability to entrance those who beheld her!

Mechanically she took out a cigarette and turned it in her fingers.

Jack spoke, looking out to the river. His words had a muffled sound.

"Why did you ask me to come up here to Channing's studio?" Then he turned his head to survey her. Color rose in his face. "What do you need of me, Teazel beauty?"

Something in his regard brought a faint effulgence into her thin face, made her seem not unlike a reed pipe into which a familiar strain of music is blown.

She turned the cigarette in unsteady fingers. "That sounds good to me: 'Teazel beauty.' Am I still that, Jack?"

She crossed swiftly to the window light in which he stood.

"If I am, I need you to tell me so. I've been down with a fever; throwing dice with death!" In a passion of sincerity, "I'd as lief be dead as ugly! For the dead aren't always ugly, Jack. But ugliness is death! Am I still beautiful? Tell me if I've lost my looks. I want the truth! From you." In the bleak light at the windows, she lifted her face to him, the whole of her being illuminating the exquisitely sharpened features and darkened eyes.

His downward look at her was thoroughly masculine.

He leaned against the window frame, folding his arms.

"God, you're vain!" he said.

"Yes," she exulted, and bit her lip, not knowing whether it was all vanity which set her heart throbbing in this agony of relief, seeing in his eyes an unchanged rating of her charms. Unchanged! Yet changed! How changed, she had not known until she saw the girl of to-day mirrored in his eyes. Light, light were the Fates!

Turning to the window she checked an impulse toward tears and wild laughter.

The wind on the river below them was like fields of rye, undulations of green. Above the water the sky was blue, one of those days when sky and water mirror each other in myriad colors. Glorianne felt color in her face. She lighted a cigarette with fingers not yet steady and blew a vapory moon out to the river. Presently, she said:

"What did you do when Peter Boudinot went back on you and your comedy—go broke?" She offered him her cigarette case.

It happened that Jack had sent her the cigarette case along with some lyrics. He now weighed the gold trifle in his hand, as if weighing the very light name enscribed on it—"Glorianne." He answered her question in a voice curbing its emotions.

"No, just my heart broke. I glad-

dened my people by burning my rhymes—and my Broadway bridges." He was weighing the slight cigarette case on his palm, a muscle of his mouth hard set. "I'm now in a brokerage—working for the Boudinots," he told her.

Glorianne's hand swung toward his, but fell.

He continued with the same enforced restraint, his voice harder.

"If you need a job, I'll jog the rich Peter's fool elbow, remind him that 'Lady Tease' is still to be produced. He'll star you, no doubt." And he tossed her cigarette case out to the river.

She was quick to send the weed she was smoking in the wake of his gift to her.

"If I play 'Lady Tease,'" she said, unshed tears in her eyes, a touch of scarlet in her cheeks, "and, offstage, win Peter's hand and heart, I'll speak a good word for his office force." She kept her glance from him, with an effort at lightness.

"Thanks." He walked over toward the table where he had laid hat and stick. His face was full of hot blood held in check.

"I may remind you of it, if you win him."

She flung out a detaining hand, in the window light and wind. Her color flared.

"If you were Peter Boudinot, yourself, would I win you?"

She was convinced in the instant by Jack's arms.

He caught her up, young Trade who was so attractive to her. He held her as if she were of no weight at all, up, in his ardent arms. He kissed her, with a passion young as it was miserable.

"God help Peter!" he said savagely.

It was odd of a show beauty, but true; he was the first chappie who had seized her in a real man embrace.



Channing hadn't kissed her, he'd watched her with tired, quizzing eyes. The rest had blown her kisses, play love, play passion, all in the big city.

In his arms, she whispered:

"Jackie! Love me! I want love!" Her lifted face was fairer than she knew.

His mouth, close to hers, answered.

"You can't serve love and mammon."

The twist of his mouth was too bitter for his years. "And you want mammon."

She buried her face on his breast. Her thin arms stole about his neck and her hands clasped in unconscious prayer.

"I want you. Oh, love me, please! What's the game worth, without this?"

"The game!" The tide of his ardor was checked again coldly. His face darkened. He unclasped her hands and released them. He looked critically at Channing's canvases of her, the shadow black on his face.

He began to pace the studio with rapid tread.

"When I came here, I'd forgotten the artist who first made you popular. I didn't know—" He halted, walked again. "Glory, Glorienne! Where have you sped to?" He flung an arm before his eyes.

She put out an involuntary hand to the nearest canvas.

Self-absorbed, self-agonized, she hadn't thought of any inference Jack might have drawn from finding her here, in Channing's studio. She, somehow, hadn't thought of the things men think, and the frailties of which women are sometimes guilty, in the town.

"Wait," she said simply to Jack. Without vanity she told him of the fruit basket, her chance imprisonment in a quarantined house, Channing's death, his will, and why he had made it—he had loved her, in passing. "And you!" she ended, pale.

Jack had heard her out.

At the finish, white as she, he stopped pacing.

"The town is full of ready liars, playing the game," he said. "I'm sorry, but I don't believe you."

She put her hands to her lips, to bluff that they were not trembling.

He continued in drowning accents:

"I think now that, not believing you, I can forget you. I think I can rid myself now of your face, your haunting face!" He was standing before her, his love for her in his eyes, his doubt of her in his voice. "Lies sound like truth on your lips—the lips I love! You—in for the game, out for popularity, out for love, out for millions!" He crossed a space, somewhat blindly, for his hat and stick.

He went quickly.

Glorianne heard the door of the house close.

She thought of Channing, asking her to wear his ring, vagrantly mindful of her in going off to God. Leaning against the window sash, she was conscious of the river below, the river. She had not loved Channing. She loved young Trade. What was beauty, life itself, without love? Tears forced themselves from under her lashes and began to fall down her cheeks, faster and faster.

She looked down at the river.

## VI.

She was looking at the river, half faint from weeping when somebody's arms closed about her.

It was Jack again.

"I came back because I love you. If you were the devil's daughter, I'd love you! But I believe in you. I believe what you say, Glorienne. I'm fool enough to love you!" He put his cheek to hers. "Don't cry any more. It's a cry game, isn't it?" His cheek was wet against hers—wet with both of their tears.

After a while, she cupped his young face in her hands and looked at it. Despite its bloom of contour, his was not a happy countenance, and she saw in it what she had come to see in Channing's face, and now felt in her own—love hunger. Men and women alike were lonely creatures, craving, after the feasting and the sham, just the satisfaction of having somebody care!

"Don't you cry! I'm going to marry Jack Trade," she said.

"Marry him?" he said, incredulous. "Jack Trade?"

The assurance her lips gave, was enough.

And, suddenly, he held her at arm's length, shadows on his face again.

"But you can't marry Jack Trade. Because——"

Frightened, she put a finger on his lips. Nearly to lose her beauty, and now to lose this!

"Why, Jack?"

His hands slipped the length of her arms, tethered her wrists tenderly.

"Because there isn't any such chap as this Jack Trade you're loving." He put his forehead against her wrists.

She stared down at him, rendered mute by those shadowy doubts ever ready to assail young lovers caught in

the vortex of the big city. Doubts of him. She bent her own head.

"I love you, whoever you are!"

He kissed her cradling wrists.

"You're you, Glorianne; the girl a dying man remembered and another man couldn't wholly forget. A girl who has thrown dice with death and come through, glorified! You're you! But I?" His voice dropped, and he did not lift his head from the frail harbor of her wrists. "People born with tin spoons in their mouths get out of their class, and into chaos, in order to hunt gold ones, while the gold-spoon fellows go bitter, chasing tinsel. I've been a tinsel-chaser. You've been a gold digger." He straightened, folding her hands in his. "I came to Broadway chasing tin. I came incognito. My name, you see, is Boudinot." Humbly, "I'm Peter Boudinot, of Fifth Avenue and dull millions. Will you marry me?"

Glorianne Teazel did the inglorious thing of fainting, under the canvas which had posted her face everywhere.

Hers had been a case of vanity, which might have fared worse. Not all of the beauties who come from everywhere to the Great Light Ways are so lucky as Glorianne!

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## THE NET

ARE we not bound into a living net

Of subtly twisted soul threads each to each,  
An intricate fabric such as might be set

To draw great fishes to the shining beach?

With not one strand but has its needful place

We cling together, on the ropes dependent,

We fibers that so deftly interlace,

To search dark waters for a prize resplendent.

Hold fast, my brothers, let the surge not rip

The heart cords of your filaments asunder,

Lest through the ragged meshes there should slip

A strange, elusive, glittering deep-sea wonder,

Such treasure as the Fisher's hands might bring

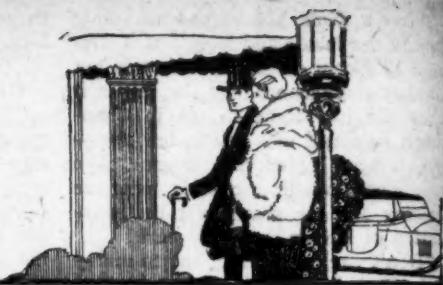
To grace the very table of the King.

CHARLES WHARTON STORK.

# Wives and a Man

By Charles Collins

Author of "On Paradise Peaks," "The Lost Portage," etc.



HE was not an improver of morals; He gave his bachelor habits a mild, gentlemanly polish now and then to remind himself that he was neither an abysmal brute nor a pagan voluptuary, but he let other people arrange their behavior to please themselves. He refused to become reconciled to the eighteenth amendment, although he was never a dangerous drinker before or after its coming. Whenever the Puritan vigilantes impounded a fleshly book or censored a doubtful play he growled that the country was under the hypocritical dominion of a fanatic minority, and was becoming a Paradise unfit for adults to live in. Frequently and publicly, in such moods of revolt, he threatened his future with a villa in Italy or a studio in Paris, where there are no stern amendments, and a man can quench a thirst. The plangent utterances of William Jennings Bryan on the theme of home, mother, and children often brought to his lips a smile as cynical as that of *Don Juan* in Hades.

This was Humphrey Allan, whose creed was personal liberty and whose mood was tolerant. This was, Humphrey, unwed at the age of thirty-six, whose philosophy was more scandalous than his actions, and whose bark was worse than his bite. This was the worldly Mr. Allan, at any rate, until the rôle of reformer was thrust upon him.

A nonconformist by nature, there was nothing in his life to force him to conform, and so he slid suavely along in his selected groove, amusing himself, accomplishing his purposes, and causing no trouble to his friends. He had neither wife nor home nor business. For the job which is god to the average man, he substituted something more difficult and spasmodic—he wrote plays and musical-comedy libretti. Having had five successes in almost as many years and the financial advice of a wise banker, he had ceased to worry about the cost of living, although he continued to write. His home was the world, and an apartment in Chicago, garnished with photographs of the actresses he had loved and lost, was his atelier. There he had a green, sweet park at his feet and a brave, blue lake on the sky line; there he was among people he knew, real Americans who could become characters in comedies; there he was only a taxi and train ride away from his Broadway market. He liked the place and spent much of his time in it; he liked it so much that he had decided, after his next success, to buy the whole building and grow old gracefully as a kind landlord.

With his career so arranged, he had no fixed social position. If the class called gentleman still exists, he belonged to it, but otherwise he was free. He could mix with the bourgeois, dip into Bohemia, or flit with the night

birds, as he chose. Wherever he went and whatever he did, he kept an easy conscience and made no false pretenses. Once he had been caught in a raid on a gambling house and, while all around him frightened husbands, fathers, and employers were constructing plausible pseudonyms and deceptive addresses, he had calmly handed the police sergeant his visiting card. He was released with a grin and a wink, but all of the John Smiths and William Browns in the party were taken away in the patrol wagon. He used to tell this story as proof of the miracle that honesty is sometimes the best policy, but he would add, ironically, that on his card he had written "pass two" to a play of his then running.

One day his name was mentioned three times in the same newspaper—as author of a bedroom farce in which, the time being a hot midsummer night, the protection of sheets was discarded by the characters; as honorary pall-bearer at the impressive Italian obsequies of a murdered dive keeper; and as among those present at an austere reception in honor of Cardinal Mercier. This accident of journalism will serve to illustrate his protean character. There was, it would appear, something universal about Humphrey Allan, even though he could not be called a genius.

Among Humphrey's mixed lot of friends there were three who could be called cronies. He saw them often at the club he used most assiduously, The Aztecs. They were a group of would-be Olympians who practiced or pursued the arts, and occasionally he was invited to their homes. They were Leander Craig, who directed public-utility companies when he was on La Salle Street and posed as a connoisseur of old masters on Michigan Avenue; Philip Harkness, a university professor who had written a book on the myth of the Holy Grail and was now working on a collection of home-brew recipes;

and Lucian Swift, who sang hymns in ritualistic churches, taught in a music conservatory, and yearned to compose a symphony to the theme of an old-style minstrel show. Craig and Harkness were older than Humphrey; the former was over fifty, and the latter would never see forty again. Swift was younger, and of the quartet he was the greatest innocent. Of their private lives, it may be said that Craig, the husband of an attractive wife young enough to keep him interested, was an inveterate philanderer, a huge, handsome rogue, bearded like a Russian grand duke of the old régime, with an eye always straying after ankles; that Harkness believed a bookish temperament should be well moistened with strong drink, preferably Scotch; and that Swift, who had married before he had sowed a single oat, behaved demurely, but dreamed of romantic adventures and a grand passion.

There came a day when Humphrey discovered his Puritan inheritance. He had once said, "If they reform the world any more, I shall go into a frenzy," but on this occasion the urge to correct, to prohibit, and to point the way toward righteousness, stirred within him. At first he was almost unconscious of this holy ferment.

Swift approached him at the club with a hangdog look.

"I'd better remind you, Humphrey," he said, "that last Thursday I spent the evening with you. We were discussing the possibility of collaborating on a comic opera."

"We were not," answered Humphrey firmly. "Victor Herbert and Jerome Kern are good enough for my lyrics. And this is the first time I've seen you for a week or more."

"Well, anyway, if you happen to meet my wife, and she says anything about last Thursday night, you'll understand."

Swift seemed to take his consent to

this mild conspiracy for granted. Humphrey nodded comprehension, but made no promises.

"And I've another favor to ask of you," continued Swift, letting his voice sink almost to a whisper. "Couldn't you lend me the key to your apartment some afternoon when you're not going to be at home?"

If Humphrey had acted according to the cynical theories of conduct which flowed from his lips whenever the talk at the club dinner table turned toward the old, reliable subject of woman, he would have assured Swift that the key to his garden of pleasure was at his disposal whenever he needed it. No doubt he would have chuckled rakishly, also, and tried to coin an epigram in the Viennese style of Arthur Schnitzler.

Instead of which he surprised himself by feeling repelled and annoyed. A vision of Mrs. Swift came into his mind—a plain, warm-hearted home body, very devoted to her Lucian, who fought the profiteers by doing her own housework, an excellent cook, and a skilled hand at an electric washing machine.

"Certainly not!" he rapped out.

He turned on his heel, to leave the blushing and speechless Lucian to the distress of an uneasy conscience. Then he had an afterthought, and came back a few steps.

"Lucian, my boy," he said paternally, "it will not do. You can't get away with it. You're too unsophisticated for that sort of thing. Why, you look as if you were in the divorce court already! You're certain to get caught, and then—well, they'll fire you from the churches, and they'll chase you out of the conservatory, and the pretty little girls will not be permitted to take music lessons from you, and you will have the devil of a time generally. So you'll have to drop it, Lucian, it and her, whoever she is. Of course, you don't want my advice, but you had better be

good just the same, or I shall be tempted to tell your wife about your desire for the key to a bachelor apartment."

With which he departed.

"If you do," the now-enraged Lucian called after him, "I'll break your neck!"

Humphrey's threat of exposing Lucian to his wife was, of course, vacant of any intention of fulfillment. It was one of the things which simply couldn't be done except in life-or-death emergencies. The secret diplomacy which parts the sexes into two hostile armies, the unwritten law of no communications across the biological barrier, could not be violated on such slight excuse. But the mere threat had moral power and, as he made it, Humphrey felt the pride of a good deed. He was meddling righteously in other people's business. Spontaneously, unconsciously, he had become a reformer, and the emotions of the rôle were not unpleasant. Lucian would stop speaking to him for a few weeks, no doubt, but that did not matter, for Lucian's conversation was never particularly brilliant.

A few days later, in the crowd of women which came surging out of Orchestra Hall after the Friday afternoon symphony concert to a babble of "Wasn't the Brahms wonderful?" Humphrey collided with Mrs. Philip Harkness.

"Yes, the Brahms was wonderful," he said in her ear blithely. "I didn't hear it; I wasn't there; I hate music; but the Brahms is always wonderful on Friday afternoons, isn't it?"

The happy intoxication of the concert faded out of her face as she recognized him. Her manner became glacial, and her greeting was frigid. Sensing a hostility which he did not understand and which he was content to pass by as haste to catch a suburban train or keep an appointment, he gave her a nod of farewell with a cheerful smile and



was about to move on. But Mrs. Harkness, a woman of quick decisions, halted him, with a clutching remark.

"That was quite a party you and Phil had at the club last night, wasn't it?"

There was a ring of challenge and command in her tone. Obviously, she wanted to know more about it.

He looked blank, trying to recall how long it had been since he had foregathered in highbrow debate with Philip Harkness.

"Oh, I don't know!" he fenced clumsily. "Anyway, I hope Phil had a good time."

"Too good, it seems," she snapped. "Of course, you can sit up until past midnight drinking and sleep until noon, having nothing at all to do, but Phil has eight-o'clock classes. He looked like a wreck at breakfast."

"Too bad," he murmured.

"I don't begrudge him a night out with his friends now and then," she said in a more friendly tone; "and it's good for him to get away from the campus and blow off steam with you men about town, but it's been happening too often lately. His health will suffer if he keeps on burning the candle at both ends. So the next time you give a party, leave him out or send him home early; will you please?"

"This," Humphrey announced to the bronze lions on the Art Institute steps across the avenue, "is getting to be too much of a good thing!"

"I hope I haven't offended you," Mrs. Harkness remarked at this outburst. "But I simply had to speak my mind. You should have seen poor, old Phil this morning."

"He had a horrible hang over, no doubt," said Humphrey. "I am familiar with the symptoms. They are unpleasant, and I'm sorry for him. But, Mrs. Harkness, when I soliloquized that this was getting to be too much of a good thing, you didn't understand me. You haven't offended me, although I

am sore just the same. No doubt you will see the point when I tell you that I didn't give a party last night, that I was not at the club last night at all, that I didn't see Phil last night anywhere, and that I haven't seen much of him for a month or more."

The mood of the reformer began to curdle within him. It was a grim, lumpy feeling of vexation with the compromises of life. It completely obliterated his old code that we jolly good fellows have got to stick together.

"Then Phil," observed Mrs. Harkness in soft horror, "lied to me."

"He did," Humphrey agreed. "He most certainly did. Hold out your hand, naughty boy!"

"If he wasn't with you, then where could he have been?"

"At the club, no doubt. Phil isn't altogether a liar, I think. Some one probably produced a bottle from his private stock, and a group of good talkers, led by your distinguished husband, proceeded to kill it. He said it was my party, I'm sure, because I seem to be a plausible explanation for my friends' occasional lapses from virtue. I have become almost everybody's standard alibi."

"Yes, Phil has mentioned you frequently," admitted Mrs. Harkness. "You seem to live in clubs and cafés and theaters."

"And so I do," he retorted. "But I am not Phil's evil genius. I wish you would let him get away with it this one last time, but you might drop him a hint that as an alibi I am not altogether dependable. If you don't, I will."

"Leave him to me," said Mrs. Harkness firmly, and then she hurried away to the Samovar Room for tea.

Humphrey felt sorry for the convivial Mr. Harkness, whose companionship he enjoyed, but also well satisfied with his betrayal of friendship. "Et tu, Philip," he said to himself, remembering Lucian. Well, this business had to

stop. Why should he, a free soul, be made to share in the petty deceptions of his friends' domesticity?

"These women," thought Humphrey, "are getting the idea that I am the town ruffian. In self defense, to dispose of me and keep their husbands home at night, they will probably try to marry me off. Then I should become like Lucian and Phil, and that would be terrible."

So speaking to his inner self, he remembered a dinner engagement that evening, en famille, with the Leander Craigs and shuddered. Lucian had at least been frank enough to give him warning, and Phil had involved him in nothing but a harmless drinking bout. But Leander—

"That rogue elephant," Humphrey muttered, "is capable of anything."

Paula Craig, patient spouse of the playful Leander, had a special place in Humphrey's affections. She was, first of all, an exquisite hostess, and this accomplishment, of course, endeared her to the bachelor heart, which is prone to sentimentalities over vicarious domesticity. There was not much social flash and glitter to Paula, but when Humphrey was invited to one of her little dinner parties he went with the comfortable sensation of going home after a long visit among trying relatives. In Paula's informal graciousness there was the mood of peace.

She was not brilliant, although among Chicago's culture chasers she made a desperate effort to keep up with the game. She was naïve enough, intellectually, to regard Humphrey's made-to-make-'em-laugh plays as vital contributions to the world's drama, and to rate their author as a man of importance, which attitude, naturally, did not lessen her in his esteem. There was a gentle brightness in her talk, however, which qualified her as a good compan-

ion on any occasion, and the rest of her charm was amiability plus refinement.

Humphrey saw in her an interesting type—a survival of the old-fashioned "lady." Paula had gabbled with the women's clubs and dabbled in suffrage, but the emancipation of her sex had not affected her character, and as a "new woman," although she did her best, she was a hopeless failure. She smoked a cigarette as if conscious of committing a crime; she became flushed and flustered with the first cocktail; and whenever she undertook to mention prostitution as a sociological problem, she pronounced the word as if some one ought to seize her and wash her mouth out with soapsuds. As for "sex," she could say it without a blush, but not without hesitation. Paula was not a prude, it may be noted, but her sense of propriety was very delicate.

Humphrey, who had come to regard the modern woman, no matter how thoroughly virtuous, as a tough customer with a hard mind, loved Paula's ante-bellum soul and its mid-Victorian overtones. For him she was one of the women he ought to have married, and the fact that she was several years his senior lent piquancy to his Platonic admiration.

And, as a contrast to Paula, in the Craig ménage, there was Polly, her offspring. If the mother was a daguerreotype, the daughter was a motion picture. If the maternal heart beat in waltz time, the filial pulse throbbed in jazz. Born as a honeymoon child, Polly was now on the verge of twenty, and Paula had abandoned all hope of understanding her. She was a perfect specimen of the war-time adolescent, impulsive, yet calculating, inadequately schooled, but completely sophisticated, good-hearted and bad-mannered, winsome and defiant. Life to her was a matter of thrills, adventures, and gay agitations. In short, she was an alluring young scamp, like all of her kind,

to describe whom Humphrey had once paraphrased Rossetti's tribute to his *Jenny* into: "Fond of a kiss and fond of the shimmy."

It was Polly who first greeted Humphrey on his seven-o'clock arrival that evening, hopeful for Leander's cock-tails.

"I've been lying in ambush for you," she said intensely. "Come into the drawing-room and let's have a heart-to-heart before mother makes her grand entrance. And if you say I've become quite a young lady since you saw me last, the way the other old friends of the family do, I'll scream."

"No fear, Polly," he answered. "I was about to remark that you've become quite an old woman. What's on your mind? Do you want my advice about bobbing your hair?"

"Don't be old-fashioned," Polly retorted. "I bobbed it centuries ago. My hair has lost its virginity, and completely recovered from the shock."

"Well, then, do you want me to psychoanalyze your dreams?"

"That psycho stuff," Polly observed with scorn, "is merely a highbrow excuse for indecent conversation. No, I want to warn you."

"About what?"

"About mother. And the way she may act to-night. You're in bad with my respected parent, old dear. Oh, don't pretend you can't guess what's the matter! She thinks you're leading father astray. Since he met you he has become a perfect Loop-hound."

"I see," said Humphrey, getting up on his dignity. "I suspected something of the sort. Has anything serious happened—between your father and mother, I mean?"

"Oh, no! Mother's not the complaining kind. But I've heard a remark now and then."

"I understand. Leander, when asked what kept him out so late last night, says that he was on the coast of

bohemia with that brilliant and irresistible scalawag, Humphrey Allan."

"Something like that," Polly admitted. "And mother merely arches her classic eyebrows, and wonders what you men can find to interest you in the stupid cafés and cabaret shows. Really, Humphrey, you've become a family nuisance. The actresses that father of mine knows! He talks about them with pride, the silly old flirt, not thinking that mother is still capable of being jealous."

"Actresses!" snorted Humphrey. "Chorus girls, more likely. And I'm not guilty of extending his greenroom acquaintance. On the level, Polly."

"Oh, don't be so virtuous! I believe you. You doubtless want to keep them all to yourself. I would, if I were a man."

"Yes, you have your father's temperament. I'm certain that in his youth he pursued every pair of tights in 'The Black Crook,' and that his bachelorhood was a riot of original 'Florodora' girls. Polly, your father is naturally polygamous."

"And I'm unnaturally polyandrous," she declared gayly. "It runs in the family. Perhaps that's why they named me Polly."

"While I," he continued ironically, "am monastic of instinct and celibate of habit."

"Rubbish! You're a sport. You're so much of a sport that your conscience never bothers you at all, and that's why you have such a calm and holy look. It's a fascinating combination. Humphrey, you are a dangerous man."

"You, Polly, are a crazy, impertinent child, and I should like to kiss you."

"That proves it. But don't try now. My hair flies all to pieces when I've been kissed and makes me look like a wild woman."

Humphrey was tempted to try his luck anyway, but the spirit of the reformer caused him to inhibit the desire.

"What a generation!" he exclaimed, staring at the mocking girl beside him.

"There goes the cocktail shaker," she said, perking up her ears to a glad sound from the dining room. "You've lost your chance. Father will be here directly."

"As for that father of yours," Humphrey declared grimly, "when I get through with him I will imitate the Count of Monte Cristo and count 'Three.'"

"That sounds rather cryptic. What does it mean?"

"It means he is the third man who has been using me as an alibi lately. I've stepped on two already and I'm going to keep up the good work. Ah, here are the cocktails!"

Paula came in to join the ceremonial of the provocative to talk and appetite, over which Leander presided with the expansive pride of a man who owned a famous cellar. He had mixed with care and now he poured with generosity.

After a modest little sip Paula put aside her glass.

"I've been hearing about your studio parties," she remarked to Humphrey with a cool purr.

He looked blank and muttered "Really?" Leander hastened to his side and poured him another cocktail, accompanied by a prodigiously furtive wink.

"Yes, Leander has been telling me. They begin at midnight and end with breakfast at seven, it seems."

"At least," Polly broke in impishly, "that is about the time father rolls home."

Humphrey tried to rise to the situation, repressing a desire to slay the bland and unperturbed Leander.

"You're invited to the next one, Paula, whenever it happens, and you too, Polly," he said.

Paula thanked him in a prim way which conveyed the impression that she would be tactful enough, when the date

was fixed, to decline for herself and daughter.

At the dinner Polly did her best to compensate for Paula's lack of warmth, and Humphrey was as jovial toward Leander as a Greek bearing gifts. The smooth surface of that social occasion did not betray its undertow.

Paula and Humphrey had luncheon together, about a week afterward, at a table for two in the Blue Stocking Club, an organization of emancipated females which followed masculine traditions down to the point of having a long list of house-account delinquents posted on the bulletin board. And there Humphrey began to make love to Paula, with her full knowledge and consent. He had selected the Blue Stocking for their rendezvous on this theory: "If you want to get talked about, don't philander in public, where no one will notice you, but choose a quiet and exclusive club, where only a few of your friends can see you."

Paula was skeptical.

"It will not work, Humphrey," she maintained. "The idea of our trying to seem flirtatious is absurd. No one will cast a suspicious eye in our direction. I'm several years older than you, remember, and I'm afraid I look all of them."

"What difference does that make?" he argued serenely. "It has been done. I am a climber intriguing with a matron of the *haut monde* for the sake of social prestige. Read your Balzac. Or you are a wronged wife revenging yourself with your husband's best friend. Read your Maupassant. Either way, it's plausible, or at any rate it has literary precedent."

"I can't imagine Leander getting jealous," she declared.

"Neither can I. He is as amiable as a St. Bernard dog, which he probably was in a recent incarnation. But I think we can succeed in making him feel ridiculous. And I also hope to en-

large your experience of life. You have outgrown him, Paula. He is the eternal boy. But at the same time you haven't kept pace with his capacity for playfulness. I want him to discover that the girl he married is still alive in you."

"Very well, I'm at your mercy. And I think it's going to be fun."

"Good. That's a promising beginning. And by the way, just to work up atmosphere, I recommend a few choice pieces of erotic literature for your boudoir. Anatole France's 'The Red Lily,' for example, and Pierre Louys' 'Aphrodite,' and Maupassant's 'Bel-Ami.'"

"But I've read them already," she protested.

"Yes, in French, which is a mystery to Leander. Get translations that he can dip into, illustrated if possible."

She wavered.

"I'm afraid he'll lose his respect for me."

"What does that matter," said the sapient Humphrey, "if you arouse his curiosity?"

"But Polly will find them."

Humphrey smiled.

"Don't worry about Polly," he remarked. "She is probably immune. It is my opinion that nothing in print short of Krafft-Ebing can make an impression on the imagination of the modern *débutante*."

"All right, I'll buy the silly books,"

Paula promised. "But what then?"

"Oh, only a luncheon and a *matinée* with me now and then, for the sake of local color and my own delight in your beautiful eyes! There will be nothing alarming until I give the signal. It all depends on Leander's next night out. That will give us an opportunity."

Paula blushed.

"Be careful. The waitress will hear you," she cautioned.

Humphrey laughed cynically.

"My last remark did sound clandestine," he admitted. "Leander out—our

5—Ains.

opportunity! Lets talk in whispers and look guilty."

And so they did, until the Blue Stockings at the other tables began to wonder.

Paula sat with Humphrey in the Jasmine Garden, at a table by the edge of the dancing floor. A few minutes before, groups of half-dressed cabaret girls had been capering fantastically before her, chirping a song which might have been written by a madman, and tainting the air with the smell of sweat mixed with talcum powder. Now, the orchestra was playing an ultra-decadent ragtime number—"The Fig-leaf Blues," it was called—and a thousand or more males and females, young and old, chic and frowzy, sinister and ludicrous, were shambling about in closely linked couples to the erratic, stirring rhythms. They were huddled together so closely that there was no opportunity for grace and skill to be manifested in the dancing. This did not interfere with their pleasure.

Yet no gayety was to be found in their faces. No smiles, no laughter, no merry exchange of talk passed between the coupled dancers. Their features were fixed in a stark, dull expression. There was no flash of quick, frank desire in the almost glazed eyes; no nervous energy of passion in their response to the music. They seemed stupidly drunk; they were apparently entranced by a sluggish intoxication of dreams.

Humphrey studied Paula teasingly.

"Isn't it wonderful?" he ironized. "America's greatest gift to modern civilization. The fourteen points of contact!"

Paula had lived through the ten years of ragtime dancing which began with "Too Much Mustard," and had enjoyed them. She had seen many a *débutante's* ball which was more like an orgy than a social ceremony. Her familiarity with the more polite phases of the jazz soul of the period, however, had not



prepared her for the phenomenon of cabaret license at fever heat. This was the first time she had ever been taken into the depths of the ragtime jungle. She was fascinated and amazed. She felt as if she were gazing down into the Grand Cañon of vulgarity.

"Who are these people?" she asked.

"Native Americans of the average kind dancing their harmless folk dances," he answered, "and drinking their mild drinks."

"It's incredible."

"It is commonplace. The same thing is going on to-night in fifty other cafés in Chicago; in a hundred in New York; in London, Paris, and Berlin; and everywhere else except, perhaps, on the Congo, where it originated. Jazz unites the world into a league of nations over which we preside. Are we not a great moral influence? But it is interesting, Paula. You must not despise it. Here is a theme for a philosopher who has not yet been born. How has it happened that this thing from the heart of darkness, this primitive eroticism, this spirit of Libitina and Priapus and the older voodoo gods has obsessed modern life? Decadence is merely a definition, not an explanation."

"Prohibition ought to help," said Paula.

Humphrey raised a glass that was full of a brownish liquid and sipped it.

"It doesn't help. Apparently, it doesn't even prohibit."

"Is that a high ball that you have?"

"So the waiter calls it. It is a blend, I think, of prune juice, grain alcohol, and cayenne pepper, and it costs one dollar a drink. I need not add that it has a mighty kick. The lid is apparently off to-night—a condition for which I have no theory to offer—and the 'hootch' is flowing freely."

Paula was glad that he had warned her. She had thought that her glass contained iced tea. She pushed it, untasted, over to Humphrey.

"When you finish both of them, you can take me home," she said.

Humphrey, watching the weaving mass of dancers, answered quietly:

"Not until we find your husband. That's why we came."

"Is he here?"

"He ought to be. He was headed in this direction when I telephoned you."

Paula became agitated. The plot was thickening too rapidly for her nerves. She began to hope that they would not see Leander, or that he would not see her. The rôle of a spying wife was one that she particularly detested.

Suddenly Humphrey exclaimed:

"There he is now! Dancing with the girl in the blue-and-white dress."

Paula looked in the direction toward which Humphrey shamelessly pointed, and immediately saw her husband, who towered above the others like a giant, whose mane of iron-gray hair, guiltless of any bald spot, waved above the crowd like the plume of Henry of Navarre. His partner, a little girl whose hat hardly came to his hirsute chin, was so completely engulfed in his embrace that she could not be identified.

"The rogue elephant is on another stampede," Humphrey murmured.

"Well, I'm glad he isn't cheek by jowl with her, anyway," said Paula.

"And he does dance well."

"Leander is as graceful," Humphrey admitted, "as a Cyclops."

The music stopped; the dancers dispersed; and the cabaret coryphées again took possession of the floor. Leander and his girl seated themselves at a table within eyeshot of Paula and Humphrey.

"Has he seen us?"

"Not yet. He is too engrossed in his lady friend."

"Well, what's to be done about it?" Paula demanded.

The suspense was beginning to irritate her.

"The classic thing," said Humphrey with a grin, "would be for us to make

a haughty exit, and for you to remark in a shrill and penetrating voice, as you brushed by his table: 'Leander always has such bad taste in his women!'

"If you think I could do a thing like that——"

"Of course not. But let's have some fun out of it. He's got to know that he's been caught, of course. Well, invite him to join us. Send a note by the waiter. He can't ignore it. He can't rush out of the place. He can't come alone, deserting his accomplice. Anything like that would be open confession that he is in bad company. So he's got to face the music and bring the girl. And then he will be your slave for life."

"Suppose she's a nice girl?"

"She isn't," Humphrey testified. "I have recognized her. She manicures by day and manikills by night."

Paula bit her lip, and then asked for a pencil and paper.

"This will be a situation for your next play," she declared bitterly.

The note was dispatched, and they studied its effect upon the distant Leander. He questioned the waiter, who pointed in their direction; he rolled the note up into a pellet and angrily threw it away; he entered into a long and apparently painful argument with his companion. It looked like a quarrel. Finally he arose with decision, and she, meekly accepting the inevitable, followed him timidly as he made his way among the tables.

For his approach, Leander adopted the mood of jocularly. He tried to make it appear that he had caught the sanctified Paula and the dangerous Humphrey out philandering, and that it was a great joke on both of them. He introduced his friend, Miss Sinclair, with heavy formality. He said that now it was a regular party, and immediately called for more drinks.

Paula was as calm and matter-of-fact as if such cabaret encounters were

the commonplaces of her domestic life. She was also unnaturally sweet to Miss Sinclair.

"'Lo, Milly," grunted Humphrey.

"How do you do, Mister Allan," answered Miss Mildred Sinclair, in her most formal and ladylike manner.

Milly was ox-eyed and peroxide of type. Her heavy, blond hair happened to be the gift of nature, but it was blatant enough to be a work of art. She was little else than a mass of pretty protoplasm. In her most alert moments her conversation seldom escaped from the three dimensions of her tribal dialect, which are "I'll say so," "What do you know about that?" and "Ain't it the truth!"

Just now, stricken with self-consciousness, a frightened poacher on conjugal preserves confronted by the lawful wife, she was completely at a loss. She did not know what to do or to say, and her motion-picture education convinced her that something dreadful was about to happen. Mrs. Craig, no doubt, would presently arise from the chair where she sat so placidly, and with a scream of rage would plant a dagger in her bosom, or hurl the water bottle at her head. If not, if she kept on being so polite and friendly, then, Milly knew, she was in love with Humphrey Allan here, and Mr. Craig knew about it, and Mrs. Craig knew he knew, and it was understood between them that they should be man and wife in name only, and it was all perfectly aristocratic and disgusting. She could not make up her mind which alternative she would prefer. Of course, the water-bottle climax would be disgraceful, and would ruin her new dancing frock, but the other thing was positively shocking. So Milly sat tight, in an agony of suspense, and devoutly wished that she were home. Her expression was a blend of the new cook caught stealing the teaspoons and a maiden aunt in an art gallery trying not to see the nudes.

But while Milly had passed into the silence, her escort was working on the theory that if he talked enough, everything would be all right. Of course he overdid it, and what he thought was a perfect supper-party style was really more like his old barroom manner after the fourth round, minus the profanity. He kept the waiter on a dogtrot, serving drinks. Paula, he insisted with husbandly fondness, should have the time of her life. She deserved it; and since the lid was off to-night, why not be merry? Paula drank his toasts in water; Miss Sinclair shrank from the liquid like a startled ingénue; and even Humphrey was cautious; but Leander kept on ordering and drinking just the same. Each glass of the poisonous concoction came to him as a blessing; it melted away his worry and soothed his embarrassment. Gradually a sense of mastery of the situation, a feeling of glowing happiness, crept over him.

He began to remark every half minute:

"Are we downhearted?"

Paula recognized this as a familiar symptom, and smiled over it affectionately. He was, as Humphrey had said, an eternal boy, and that was no doubt the reason why she always forgave his juvenile delinquencies. The utter stupidity of Miss Sinclair also comforted her.

Suddenly, however, she gasped and turned pale. She stared out over the dancing floor, which was now less densely populated, with troubled eyes.

"What's the matter?" Humphrey wanted to know. "Has the public kissing begun?"

"Polly is here," she whispered to him.

Humphrey looked in the direction Paula indicated, and saw the missing third of the Craig family cheek-by-jowling rhythmically with a limber youth. Her grave ecstasy annoyed and her delectable legs disturbed him.

"The little wretch!" Paula mur-

mured. "She is supposed to be at a Pavilion Club party."

"Who's the young Saint Vitus she's with?" hissed Humphrey.

"Oh, he's perfectly all right! One of the Astor Street McGuires. Basil Fernando McGuire, I think his name is."

"One of our set," Humphrey observed sardonically. "That makes it legal. I remember Basil. He's the boy over whose prostrate form you stumble in the coat room after the Packers-and-Picklers' ball. He carries a gold hip flask."

Leander wanted to know what the secret was, and, of course, was told by Paula that it was nothing. This did not give him complete satisfaction. He wagged his beard at them solemnly and glowered.

"Please understan', Humphrey Allan," he gurgled, "zhat zhat lady's my wife."

"And who," inquired Humphrey, bowing toward Miss Sinclair, "is this lady?"

"Perfect lady," testified Leander, "Old Chicago family. 'R name's Milly—Milly—oh, never mind!"

Miss Sinclair thought that pistols would be drawn in another moment.

Vexed by the change in Leander's attitude, Paula arose to break up the party, without the faintest idea of what would happen next. As she did so the dance music stopped, and Polly Craig, emerging from the trance of young Mr. McGuire's perfect sense of syncopation, became conscious of the near presence of her stately mother. Straight toward Paula she bolted, with laughter that was half mockery and half affection. Mr. McGuire trailed after her, rather ill at ease.

"And father, too!" exclaimed Polly happily, as she joined them. "Humphrey Allan has taken the family out stepping!"

Paula gave Polly a look of accusation, nodded coldly to the scion of the

Astor Street McGuires, and introduced Miss Sinclair.

"We are starting home," she said. "You'd better follow our example, Polly. The limousine will hold all six of us."

Leander had not risen to his feet. He was apparently transfixed by the apparition of Polly, at whom he stared stupidly.

"My angel daughter!" he declaimed dolorously. "Ought to be spanked!"

Polly began to giggle.

"You look so queer, all of you," she caroled. "Father, what's the matter?"

"Matter? Matter?" exclaimed Leander. "I'll tell you whash matter. Zhat man"—pointing to Humphrey—"was out wizh my wife! Out jazzin' around wizh your sainted muzzer, Polly. Milly an' me caught 'em. Milly's a detective. Out wizh my wife, he wazh! My wife!"

At this alcoholic outburst a wicked inspiration came to Humphrey.

"Well, Leander," he said persuasively, "if she is your wife, why don't you invite her to dance? She thinks you're a good dancer, don't you, Paula?"

"I'm the Vernon Castle of Lake Shore Drive," Leander solemnly asseverated. "Come on, Paula. Lesh have li'l shimmy."

With which Leander arose and seized his sainted wife, who, dreading a scene, followed him on to the floor. The music had just started, and the floor was as yet uncrowded. Polly and Mr. McGuire, taking the vacant chairs, watched them with the supercilious smiles of their generation; Humphrey gazed with the air of a Machiavelli; and Miss Sinclair stared in bovine stupefaction, wondering what would happen next.

It came as Humphrey had thought it would. A sudden paralysis benumbed Leander. A great giddiness spun in his brain. A swift weakness smote him

in the knee joints. The venom of the "hootch" had struck its deadly blow.

He swayed backward, and Paula released herself from his hold. He swayed forward, and then, like the fall of a snow-capped pine, chieftain of the forest, which comes down to a puff of wind with the tumult of a roar of surf, such was the fall of Leander Craig. It was an epic thing, and its crash was echoed by the cruel laughter of a thousand throats.

Even Polly laughed, not in derision, let it be said to save her reputation as a loving daughter, but as one laughs automatically at a banana-peel joke. When she saw that Miss Sinclair was laughing, too, she snarled at her fiercely:

"Shut up, damn you!"

"Three!" counted Humphrey, without a smile.

How Polly crisply ordered young Mr. McGuire to take "this woman"—meaning Miss Sinclair—home in his car; how Mr. McGuire promptly obeyed, thus acquiring merit and Miss Sinclair's gratitude; how Polly and Paula, hovering over Leander—now in the hands of six head waiters—found that the shock of his debacle had sobered him temporarily; how Humphrey tactfully covered the line of retreat, paid the bill, and picked the family limousine out of the curbstone herd of cars; and how they all drove home without saying another word except "Good night"—these are minor matters. But a few weeks later fate again struck a major chord.

Humphrey was waiting at a street corner for a Sheridan Road auto bus, thinking of nothing in particular except that he had lost three of his best friends, but found his own soul, when a sleek landaulet slipped up beside him and stopped.

"Want a ride, buddie?" a girl's voice called out.

"Polly!" Humphrey exclaimed. "I was daydreaming about you, and lo, you materialize!"

"How do you like my new car?" Polly asked as they whirled away.

Humphrey admired.

"I haven't thanked you for it yet."

"Thanked me?" he said in great surprise.

"And mother is to have the most scrumptious new coat of sables that ever came out of Abyssinia, or wherever they grow sables."

"Sable, in heraldry, is black," said Humphrey in his pedagogic manner.

"And Abyssinia is black in anthropology. Yes, it ought to be Abyssinia."

"She'll thank you for it, too," purred Polly, "when she gets ready to speak to you again."

Humphrey began to understand. His answering chuckle was long and comforting.

"Every woman has her price," Polly continued, "and mother and I come high. We're under vow, of course, never to mention that affair to father again. He's crushed, poor, old dear. His feelings have been hurt, and after dinner he puts on his comfys and stays home to swear at himself. I'm sure he's reformed."

"Leander will never reform permanently," declared Humphrey, "until the thing that puts age on all men comes to

pass. And that depends entirely on yourself."

Polly skeptically wanted to know what she could do.

"I'm not exactly a moral influence," she observed.

"Find him a son-in-law that he can't keep pace with!" urged Humphrey.

Polly smiled vaguely and thought it over for a block or two.

"I shall need help," she cooed.

"That is where I come in," he replied firmly.

The speed dial suddenly leaped from twenty to thirty miles an hour, but Polly wasn't thinking about machinery.

"I believe," she admitted, "that you might be useful. Besides, it will be thrilling to marry a man who, my melodramatic father says, shall never cross our threshold again."

Humphrey snuggled against her under the driving wheel, and while they told the world they were engaged, or ought to be, with a clumsy, but convincing kiss, the landaulet, swerving as if drunk with joy, tore a fender off a companion car. The startled faces which glared and shouted after them happened to be those of young Mr. McGuire of Astor Street and Milly Sinclair of the beauty parlors. But Polly didn't give a damn. And in the heart of Humphrey the spirit of reform was jubilant.

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# The Parrot

By Gilbert Frankau

Author of "Seeds of Enchantment," "The Hindermate," etc.



THE best nerve specialist in Harley Street, Sir Heron Baynet, eyed his patient across the consulting-room desk, and asked: "You've told me everything?"

The young man—he looked twenty-five, but he might have been thirty—hesitated. The blue eyes under the high forehead held steadily to the lined face of the specialist, the smooth cheeks did not twitch; nor was there any neurasthenic droop to the clean-shaven mouth. An athlete, Sir Heron judged—one of those long-limbed, large-handed, deep-voiced, slow-moving Englishmen whose very reticence makes them such difficult subjects for the psychotherapist. He repeated his question:

"You've told me everything, Mr. Margerson?"

"Everything? Yes. I think so." Margerson spoke slowly. "I suppose it's only natural that a man should be a bit"—he fumbled for his word—"abnormal after crashing from fifteen thousand. Shook up my brains, I expect. Not that they were anything to write home about before the accident."

"But you told me the accident, the crash from your 'plane, took place three years ago," persisted the consultant. "And you've only noticed this—er—peculiarity during the last six weeks?"

"It may have been coming on for longer than that. I'm afraid I'm not much good at describing my own symptoms."

"And you say you really are a rich man?"

"Rich!" Margerson laughed. "Why I'm quite indecently wealthy. My father left me a million and a half in securities besides the family business."

"You sold the business?"

"Yes. For another half million."

"H'm." Heron Baynet picked a card from the mahogany index, a fountain pen from the silver rack. "H'm." He began to write. "Margerson, Eric. Twenty-eight. Unmarried." Followed details of blood pressure, pulse, eyesight, knee jerk, and a note, "Physique magnificent;" then, "Specific delusion: poverty. Incipient insomnia. Admits occasional suicidal impulses. Query: if concealing family history?"

Meanwhile, Eric Margerson, watching the movements of the fountain pen, knew that he had made a fool of himself, knew that some doctors, and more especially doctors who pretended to cure a man of "nerves," were professional highwaymen, robbers of the rich. Eric Margerson said to himself:

"There's nothing the matter with me. And even if there were, this old idiot couldn't help."

"The old idiot," looking up from his card, said almost the same thing.

"I'm afraid I can't be of much use to you, Mr. Margerson. If you take my advice, you'll try and find some interesting work. Idleness, in a case such as yours, only encourages the mind to neglect its function, which is control. Try to control these delusions, Mr.

Margerson. By the way, you're not contemplating matrimony?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"For various reasons." The specialist took the eyeglasses off his nose, polished them on the sleeve of his coat. "You see, impulses such as you have described are sometimes transmitted from father to son. And in case you were contemplating matrimony it would be very interesting."

A flicker of annoyance showed in the patient's eyes. Rising, he said:

"I'm sorry to have troubled you, doctor."

"Not at all." Through the eyeglasses, replaced on nose, Sir Heron Baynet scrutinized his man. "I regret not having been of more assistance." And, seeing the youngster take out his pocketbook, Sir Heron added, "Thank you. That will be five guineas."

Counting the five notes from his case, the two half crowns from his trousers pocket, Eric Margerson was aware of "the horror," of "the Thing" which had driven him to Harley Street. The Thing had followed him, perched, scarlet-pinioned and malignant, on the Japanese screen in the far corner of the consulting room. The Thing cackled to see the five notes spread on the desk, the two heavy coins on top of the notes. The Thing cackled.

"Sand in an hourglass. It pours away. You can't stop it pouring."

The horror, contrary to custom, followed Eric Margerson down Harley Street. He could almost hear its twisted feet scratching along the pavement. But he refused to let the Thing hurry him. That way, he knew, lay panic.

Sun, emerging sulkily from wet clouds, shone on him strolling, shone on the mud-splashed pavement, on his patent-leather boots, on the gold ring of his umbrella. But no sun shone on the Thing behind, on the intangible

horror which drove him, and drove, across Cavendish Square, through Vere Street, over Regent Street, into Bond Street, down Bond Street.

He would have liked to loiter, shopping, in Bond Street. His man had mentioned the need of shirts, of silk socks. He would have to order a supply of cartridges before the shooting season began. When he stopped outside his gunsmith's, the horror came quite close, whispering:

"Not yet! Sand in an hourglass. Wait till it pours away. Then——"

Eric Margerson stood for a long time peering at the weapons behind the plate glass. The smooth, brown barrels of the twelve-bores fascinated him. He wanted to go inside, to handle them. But more than the twelve-bores, he wanted to handle the black grips, the black barrels of the pistols. Why shouldn't he buy one of those pistols, the long, single-chambered pistol in the polished-wood case? That one would be best, because there were twenty-five cartridges.

"Not yet!" whispered the Thing.

Eric Margerson continued his stroll, and the horror continued to follow. But the scratching feet lagged on the pavement. The scratching feet were afraid. The Thing with the scratching feet knew that if Margerson strolled left-handed out of Bond Street, it would not dare accompany him.

The man in the blue suit, the patent-leather boots, and the bowler hat, who turned into Burlington Gardens and made for the West End branch of the Bank of England, was a perfectly ordinary, long-limbed denizen of Mayfair, so far removed from those horrors which beset the uncontrolled mind that, looking back, he could no longer visualize the Thing with the scratching feet, could scarcely remember Sir Heron Baynet's question about matrimony, the statement which had followed the question.

Yet one word of that statement, the word "transmitted," flickered in the subconscious dark of Margerson's personality as he entered the bank, remained with him while he talked with the clerk, refused to be entirely exorcised even by the counting over of a hundred pounds in notes, the stuffing of them into his pocketbook.

"If you'll excuse my mentioning it, sir," said the clerk, "your balance is rather higher than usual. Nearly five thousand. Hadn't we better put a thousand or two on deposit?"

"Thanks, but I don't like letting myself get too low," answered Margerson, and strolled out again into the sunshine. "Transmitted," he thought, "transmitted. I wonder whether I ought to have told him."

"My dear, you know I haven't been to a dance since——" Nesta Thring gazed wide-eyed across the shadowy studio.

It was always cold in the studio, even at high noon of a midsummer's day, and toward tea time, the shadows began to gather. They gathered round Nesta, round the gray-eyed, high-foreheaded girl with the sleek, brown hair and the slim expressive fingers.

"It wasn't your fault, and you've no right to spoil your life." Eileen Appleby, forthright and buxom, gold hair looped round heavy-lobed ears, tapped an impatient shoe on the stained floor. "You've simply got to take hold of yourself, Nes. Besides, this man Margerson's a millionaire."

"I loathe people with money," said Nesta Thring. Her voice was low and controlled, too controlled. As though she dreaded lest speech should betray her thoughts!

"That's sheer pose, Nes. People with money are no worse than people without. As a matter of fact, they're usually better. It's terribly difficult to be really nice when one's poor." Eileen

adjusted her hat at the painting mirror. "Say you'll come, Nes. To oblige me. I can't very well go by myself."

"Why not? This isn't the eighteenthies." The shadows were gathering close. Eileen gone, she, Nesta, would be engulfed in them. Eileen moved to the door.

"Don't be a pig, Nes. It isn't often I ask favors."

"But I haven't got a frock."

"Rubbish. You've got at least six."

"Out of fashion!"

"Fashion be damned, my dear. I'll fetch you at eight," said Eileen Appleby, and bolted to her own studio.

Margerson, as he dressed for dinner that evening, knew himself nearing the end. His fingers shook as he adjusted his white tie. His eyes, staring back at him from the mirror, seemed the eyes of a dead man, of the man he had found beside the hourglass.

Every light in the luxurious flat was ablaze; he could hear his valet, busy with hat brush and pad, in the adjoining room. But neither lights nor valet could keep the Thing much longer at bay. Even the pocketbook—and there were three hundred-pound notes in the gold-monogrammed pocketbook on the dressing table—would soon lose its power.

"Get me a sherry-and-bitters, please, Wainright," called Eric Margerson. "The brown sherry."

"Certainly, sir."

"Is the car ready?"

"Yes, sir."

Drinking the sherry—drink had lost its bite long since, but the habit endured—suffering himself to be helped into his dress coat, his overcoat, taking hat and stick from the impassive Wainright, Eric Margerson managed sufficient self-control to visualize the past.

It was early November. Four months since he had visited the "old idiot" in Harley Street, four months

since he had not told that which must never be told to a living soul—the secret of the dead beside the hourglass, the secret of the Thing.

The "old idiot" had spoken of work. As if work could exorcise the scarlet-winged horror. Only dissipation, mad nights with girls and wine and music, such a night as the present, could lull the Thing with the scratching feet, the Thing whose cackled "Poverty!" drove him to a passion of reckless spending.

"If you and I had a tenth of that fellow's income," said half a dozen well-groomed young men to a half a dozen décolleté young women, "we certainly could enjoy life."

All eyes at Ciro's Club were fixed on Margerson's party as they made their way among the diners to the long table at the far end of the room. It was a biggish party, sixteen in all, and the long table had been lavishly prepared for it. Flowers banked, red and yellow above the oysters and the cocktail glasses. The maitre d'hôtel stood expectant. Magnums of the best were already cooling in their ice buckets.

Nesta Thring was glad of the buzz which greeted their entrance, glad of the lavishness, glad, above all, for the sudden, yellow outblaze of light in the roof as they sat down. Here were no shadows, here was only forgetfulness. She had been a fool to hide herself so long.

Except for a telltale line or so under her gray eyes, the girl looked almost her young self. To Margerson, sitting between her and Eileen Appleby, she seemed positively radiant. He forgot the remainder of his guests, almost forgot himself, in admiration of the dimpled shoulders peeping from the gold frock, of the smooth hair, the rounded arms, and the expressive fingers. He whispered to Eileen:

"I didn't quite catch your friend's

name." He heard it and began an aimless conversation.

She answered his questions cautiously; she seemed averse to chatter. He judged her rather a sobersides; but liked her none the less for that.

The meal progressed. Talk grew louder about them. Music sprayed the room. Wine circulated, bubbling. Coffee came, and liqueurs. Tobacco fumed. They were clearing the center table from the floor. Music blared. Dancing began.

"Shall we?" asked Margerson, laying his half-smoked cigar on the coffee saucer.

"Not yet. If you don't mind. I'd so much rather watch the first one." Nesta's voice was still low, controlled. The wine had not moved her. Cigarette between parted lips, she eyed the dancers. They, the dancers, brought things back to one. Was it fair, was it fair to the dead, that she should have come? Pain crept up behind the widening pupils of her gray eyes.

They were alone at the table now. Silent. And suddenly Margerson grew aware of the Thing.

Never before had the Thing dared itself in such surroundings. Always, while he danced, it waited for him at home. Then why, to-night of all nights, should he hear the scratching feet through the slither of the dancers?

The scratching feet slithered near and nearer, till he knew the horror perching, scarlet pinioned and malignant, close to the dimpled shoulders of the girl at his side. The Thing was counting the cost of the dinner he had given:

"Eighty pounds," cackled the Thing. "Sand in an hourglass."

Margerson shivered, signaled the maitre d'hôtel, drew a hundred-pound note from his pocketbook, and said:

"Don't bother about bringing the bill." Then he turned to Nesta.

"I insist on your dancing with me,

Miss Thring." Couldn't she see the horror, the horror at her left shoulder?

"I—I really don't want to, Mr. Margerson." Didn't he know, surely every one in London knew, why it wouldn't be decent of her to dance? "I wonder if you'd think it awfully rude of me if I went home."

"She *can* see it," thought Margerson. "That's why she won't dance with me. That's why she wants to go home." Aloud he said, sullenly:

"I've stuck it for three years. You ought to be able to put up with it for one evening."

The maitre d'hôtel came back with his change, twenty pounds. He waved the man away. Why didn't the girl say something? Why did she stare and stare at him? He almost screamed at her:

"It isn't *my* fault, if you see it! I didn't make the Thing. It was made for me."

"Don't!" The control in Nesta's voice snapped as dry twigs across a man's knee. "Don't talk about *him*. I thought he'd stop in the studio. I oughtn't to have come. Let me go back. Get me a taxi and let me go back!"

He caught at her bare arm as she rose.

"Don't go! Let *me* go. He—God knows why you call the Thing '*he*'—won't stop if I don't."

She gazed down, affrighted, into his blue eyes; saw them crazy as she felt her own.

"I don't know what you mean, unless you, too——"

Margerson sprang to his feet. In his distraught brain, the dancing place was a blazing cage of scarlet wings. He could hear the Thing screaming at him, see its beak already gouging at the gray eyes of the girl.

"Let's get away!" he shouted at her. "Let's get away from it!"

Syncopated jazz music drowned the shout of Margerson's voice; dancing heads scarcely noticed the pair as they fled across the parquet.

Margerson's mind held only vaguest recollections of their flight from *Ciro's*. He knew that Nesta had left him for a moment to get her cloak, that he had cursed at not finding his car, that she had given some address to the taxi driver. All else, even the horror, was a blank behind driving rain.

The rain drove and drove, lashing at the windows of their vehicle, blurring the street lamps to kaleidoscopic spangles of orange and silver. The girl had averted herself. He did not dare speak to her. The hands on her lap were clenched about the white gloves. The feet in the gold shoes arched in tension. She was all tension, wires drawn to the breaking point. He touched her arm, felt the muscles flexed, hard as stone. The rain drove and drove at them. They drove, rigid as statues, through the driving rain.

Their taxi stopped, and she made a movement to get out. He said, "Wait a moment; I'd better pay him;" fumbled for money, half-expecting that she would protest.

But Nesta Thring was beyond protestations. Across that rain-beaten courtyard, down that half-lit passage, in the bare studio at the end of the passage, waited the shadows. To-night, she no longer dared face the shadows alone.

Margerson, following her at a run, felt the rain on his face, felt glad for its coolness.

A light burned in the fanlight above the studio door. In the beam of the light, the girl's gray eyes showed like the eyes of a sleepwalker. She found her key and let them in. Margerson saw that every electric light in the studio was ablaze. And when, leaving him for a moment, she passed through



a door at the end of the studio, he saw that there, too—shone unshaded electric lights.

He took off his drenched hat, his wet overcoat; laid them on a divan. Anthracite burned in the big stove. Heavy curtains had been drawn across the high, north windows. It was warm in the studio. Unpleasantly warm, he thought. And desolate! Canvases turned to the walls, empty easels, dusty draperies. As though the ghost of a dead painter had forbidden the living to work! But, at least, the horror had not followed them through the rain. The horror must have returned to his own flat, to the other place where a soul in darkness tried to stave off darkness with a blaze of lamps.

He said to the girl when she came back to him:

"Do you keep them burning night and day?"

"No." The lines under the gray eyes showed as a fine network of pain; the lips hardly moved to their syllables. "No. I tried that. But it didn't do any good. And I was ashamed."

"You mean, when friends came to see you?"

"Yes."

"But you sleep with them on?"

"Of course. You, too?"

Margerson nodded assent.

"Haden't you better smoke?" said the girl. "That usually does good. There's a box of cigarettes somewhere or other. I'll find them."

She moved about the room, aimlessly, making curious detours from one piece of furniture to the other.

"Why do you do that?" asked Margerson irritably.

"What?"

"Zigzag about."

"I'm afraid of running into him," said the girl. "And I can't find any cigarettes. You'll have to smoke your own."

She detoured her way back to the

stove, accepted a cigarette from his case. His fingers shook as he held the match for her. They faced one another, upright, silent, two souls in hell. At last, the man spoke.

"You've tried doctors, I suppose?"

"Only one. And he wanted to know too much. I—I hated him for pretending not to know, for trying to make me tell him. You see, he must have known *really*. Everybody knows about Nesta Thring. You know, of course. That's why you came in with me."

"I don't." Margerson's voice was steady. For the moment, his mind controlled itself. "I don't. Honor bright, I haven't got the faintest idea."

She came closer. Her eyes peered up at him.

"You swear that? On your honor? Then I'll tell you. It may help. The doctor said it would help. But he was only pretending not to know. Give me another cigarette."

He gave her the cigarette, and she began to speak, half to herself, half to him.

"I'm Nesta Thring. Everybody except—I've forgotten your name—but everybody except you knows about Nesta Thring. She was going to be married. I mustn't tell you his name. That wouldn't be fair. But he was a painter and he wanted to marry Nesta. And Nesta Thring promised. That was the beastly part of it; she promised. The coroner made her admit——"

"The coroner?" Margerson's face twitched.

"Of course. There had to be a coroner. You see, when Nesta Thring broke her promise, when she told him that she couldn't marry a poor man, he"—Margerson, bending down, only just caught the low words—"he killed himself. Poor Nesta! It wasn't her fault. She never thought, when she told him. And she has paid for it. A hundred times over, she has paid for it. *He* made her pay for it. Every

night, he sits and watches her. And to-night——" The voice broke in her throat. She put out a hand to him, and he caught at it, as a man drowning might catch at a thrown rope.

"Go on!" he prompted. "What happened to-night?"

"He followed me out. He was in the courtyard when Eileen came to fetch me. Eileen couldn't see him. I thought he'd gone back to the studio. But he hadn't. He followed me. You saw him at the dance." Her fingers clutched. "You *did* see him?"

And suddenly Margerson laughed. A high-pitched, quavering laugh. A madman's laugh.

"Him? Him? Of course I didn't see him. Why should I? I saw the parrot. It was trying to scratch your eyes out. That's why I took you away."

"The parrot?" Now fear had its way with Nesta Thring. Her legs shook under the gold frock. And yet, this was a different fear. Physical! Almost a relief after the shadowy apprehensions of the mind!

"Yes. The parrot. The poor, old governor's parrot. It wasn't really a parrot. It was a macaw. Scarlet! Its wings were all scarlet, and its feet scratched. He said, in his letter, that I ought to sell the parrot. That it was worth thirty shillings."

"Who said?" Somehow the haze of many months had cleared from Nesta's mind. She knew herself still afraid, yet with a pleasant fear. Physical! Intelligible! Fear of the man whose laugh still rang in her ears.

"The governor, of course."

"Your father?"

"Yes." Margerson began laughing again. "Would you like to hear about him? It's a lovely story. I've never told it to any one before. But you're haunted, too. So it doesn't matter. And besides"—his voice dropped, grew cunning—"we didn't have a coroner.

Nobody knows anything, except myself and the parrot. I thought I'd killed the parrot. But it won't die. They never do when they've got scarlet wings."

He gripped her hand, and the grip hurt. But Nesta did not cry out. Better the grip of a maniac's hand, the sound of a maniac's voice, than solitude among the shadows.

She wondered, as he began to speak, what could have happened to the shadows. There were no shadows in the studio, only a blaze of raw light under which she, Nesta Thring, stood, gripped by a madman.

"You're a pretty woman," said the madman. "Too pretty to kill yourself. But, of course, you will kill yourself. We all do in the end. My governor did. Mad as a hatter, of course. Poor old governor! He thought he was ruined. That was *his* horror. Money. I've seen him running up and down the office, swearing we were going bankrupt, swearing the clerks were stealing the postage stamps. Funny! Because he left a couple of million when he killed himself. I suppose it was my fault in a way. I used to laugh at him. You couldn't help laughing, especially about the clock. I haven't told you about the clock."

He stopped for a moment, and it came to Nesta—how, she did not know—that his voice altered, became the voice of an old man.

"If only I weren't so tired, I could tell you a lot about the clock. It stood in the governor's bedroom. A grandfather's clock. Tick! Tick! Tick! You know the kind. He said the ticking prevented his going to sleep. Silly old governor! As if any one ever did go to sleep. You and I don't, do we? So we moved it into the study—where the parrot was."

The grip on Nesta's fingers relaxed. "But he took a dislike to it. He said he wouldn't live with any damned clock. Clocks made too much noise.

He wanted an hourglass. So we bought him one. He'd given up the business by then. I made him. You see, he didn't want to pay the wages. You've no idea what a fight I had about the wages every week, every single week. Till he gave it up. I was glad when he gave it up. And then, of course, he killed himself."

In the raw glare, Margerson's blue eyes showed as the eyes of a sleep-walker, as Nesta's eyes had shown.

"You're rather like what I remember of my mother. You're much too pretty to kill yourself. I shouldn't, if I were you. It's only when you don't tell people that it's so bad. The old idiot in Harley Street knew that. I told him it came from the crash. It didn't, of course. The crash only restarted it. One loses control, you know. I kept it under for years. Till the crash. But I can't keep it under control any more. That's why I'm telling you. I used to go and see him every evening. After office hours. He was funny, a little, old man in a dressing gown, with his hourglass, and his macaw, and his: 'Well, Eric; made any money to-day? Eric, can you lend your father any money to-day, Eric?' But the last time I went, he didn't say anything at all. He was dead, you see. Dead as a doornail. And the sand had run out of the hourglass, and the parrot had got out of its cage. There was a letter, of course, to say why he'd done it. 'No more money. Not a bob in the house.' That's what he wrote. You'll write a letter when you do it. One simply has to write a letter. I've written three already. You'll burn them for me, won't you?"

The man's voice was failing. He staggered where he stood, and Nesta, understanding a little, helped him toward the divan.

"I burned his or they'd have called it suicide. And after the inquest, I killed the parrot. Poor old parrot! But it had to be killed. It knew too much. 'Eric,' it used to cackle, 'Eric, made any money, Eric?' So I wrung its neck." Words died to a whisper. "If only—their feet—wouldn't—scratch—after you wring their necks."

Margerson sank down on to the divan, and Nesta, bending over him, heard a boy's voice issue from the half-closed lips.

"Is that you, mother?" said the boy's voice. "Nice of you to come in and say good night. I'm most awfully sleepy. Give me a kiss before I go to sleep."

Eileen Appleby, returning anxious from Ciro's, saw Nesta Thring's door ajar and crept in. No lights burned in the studio, but a crimson glow from the anthracite stove revealed Margerson, full length on the divan, a purple cushion under his head. And by Margerson's side, watchful in a deep chair, sat Nesta.

"He's asleep," whispered Nesta. "You mustn't turn the lights on. You mustn't wake him."

"But my dear——"

"Hush! You don't know. Pray God that you never will know. He's been down into the valley of the shadow. But I'm going to save him, Eileen. And I'm going to save myself. Don't you understand? If he's saved, I'm saved, too. A life for a life. And, oh, Nesta, I love him!"

But neither then nor thereafter did Eileen Appleby understand. To Eileen Appleby and the friends of Eileen Appleby it always seems that "Nesta was damned lucky to marry a millionaire, especially after that other business."





# The Man Who Was Strong

By Paul Hervey Fox

Author of "Philanderer's Progress,"  
"The Importance of Being  
Pretty," etc.

**Y**OUNG Betterton was introduced to Barbara Arthur at a dance in the Skohasset Country Club. He was conscious of a sensation which a good many equally young men had experienced before him.

There have been various attempts to define the superior powers of one girl over her competitors. Words like "magnetism" have been invented to explain the mystery. In writing of Barbara Arthur, I prefer to call it vitality. That strange essence, whatever it may be, which charges the atmosphere of a room with the entrance of one man or one woman, that compelling allurements which has its source not in mere good looks or stimulating talk, but in some quality, intangible and remote, was possessed by Barbara Arthur.

In the Middle-Western city where she lived, this was admitted. It was impossible for other women to cut her, or refer to her with lifted eyebrows, for she was in their top circle, and her father, old Major Arthur, had created one of their first fortunes.

Society in such a city is pleasantly medieval in character. The butcher and the baker and their ladies, the smaller men of business and the professions, and the alien cosmopolis of mill or factory workers, blend into some vague cloud like the peasantry of the middle ages. Securely above them, with a barbarian's taste for all sports and a barbarian's naive culture, dwell their masters. And in this kind of so-

ciety Barbara Arthur was the daughter of the lord of the castle.

She was now twenty-four, and she had had as many offers as her years. Her enemies—and these were women—said she was a man hunter, and they studied her methods. Some of them tried to repeat her tone, imitate her inflections and her phrases. They could not quite catch the pitch. She could flatter and yet appear aloof. She could be daring without being rude. She was used to flattery, bored by it, and acutely distressed if it were not promptly forthcoming. She set herself to win people, and succeeding, was dissatisfied by a too facile victory. She had glutted her vanity and starved her emotions.

Young Betterton, as I say, met this paragon at a dance at the local country club. He was never to forget that moment, made exquisite by fine, dramatic sensibilities. An excellent orchestra filled the clean, colorful room. Dancers with laughing, flushed faces, girls with heads held with sensuous grace, merged before his eyes in the alcove where he stood. Against that background of sound and happy confusion stood a tall girl, not too pretty, yet with something vivid, something even mysterious, in her lifted, smiling face.

Behind young Betterton, with an air of watching the proceedings with their mouths, were his two stolid cousins—those nice, dumpy girls, Julia and Dorothy Stone. An impatient partner

blocked the entrance with an aspect of politely wishing young Betterton elsewhere.

His cousins had just introduced him to the fascinating Miss Arthur. She said what no other girl of her age could have said without seeming forward or flippant.

"Mr. Betterton? I like that name! And you look interesting. Will you talk to me—later? There's, let me see, the sixth dance free."

The sentences, quick, careless, and somehow actually disdainful, were babbled in a way which made them light as air. There was challenge in them, and more than challenge in her attitude, in her lowered eyelids, in the breath of mockery about her small, red mouth.

Young Betterton had faced such weapons before imperturbably. Something in her that was larger than her apparent coquetry caught him up and scared him. In a flash, as he stood there, he recalled his cousins' whispered prelude about this woman's irresistible quality, and remembered that he had secretly scoffed. He was a New Yorker, and he knew that, in the hierarchy of American cities, he was therefore an aristocrat. His cousins, dimly aware of his pretense to a deeper sophistication, had planned this meeting to humble him. The man admitted with a private groan that they had succeeded.

Young Betterton had not fallen in love at a glance. But he was more sharply affected than he had been for many months. Every impulse in him demanded that he see this girl, put forward his best efforts to entertain her, charm her, win her, in whatever way he might.

And yet young Betterton, desiring fiercely to know her better, wishing intensely that he might claim, or sit out, that sixth dance with her, fought that wish with tight lips, and, an obstinate determination.

He was not married or engaged to any other girl. He was not diffident or self-conscious. He was nothing obvious and expected. The fact is, young Betterton was crazy.

Crazy, of course, as most of us who are worth anything are crazy. Young Betterton had no insane faith in an ideal or a person. But he owned a theory.

The history of that mania in all its manifestations would be tedious. Where he had first run across the notion, it is impossible to say. Perhaps he unearthed it in some introspective novel or quack, self-help course, though it is difficult to imagine young Betterton reading either.

It is simpler far to understand why it gained such a hold on him. He was a tall young man with a shock of light, disordered hair, and a thin, sensitive nose. He had the compliance that comes from liking to be liked. And with that he had a profound horror of weakness.

His life had been luxurious in the main. One of his father's many offices had offered him a sinecure after four pleasant, idle years in college. And the easy channels into which his life flowed had blunted, he felt, some of that hard, fierce, fighting determination without which a man is only a shell.

All at once he began to broach an odd theory to his friends. He learned how to tell it in a variety of ways, made a little joke out of it as a man apologizes for his hobby, and in the end identified himself with it.

That theory in its briefest form was this:

If you would cultivate strength of will, train yourself to do the exact opposite of every inclination. Thus you will prepare yourself to act in a real crisis with the unswerving directness of a machine.

Young Betterton explained this quite vividly in his gay, agreeable voice on



a good many occasions. He had begun by talking with a twinkle in his eye, but before long he made, at least, one convert. He converted himself.

Black coffee after a theater party had kept him awake one night. He tossed and pitched and heard three o'clock strike. It was chill, dull, winter weather. Young Betterton grew sleepy at last. He thought of the lonely streets outside, and sighed contentedly. Nothing appealed to him quite as much as the snug solitude of his room and this soft bed. Nothing could have prompted him to leave it—nothing.

All at once some minor demon shot the memory of the theory into his fancies. Young Betterton stared with wide, reflective eyes into the darkness. By an effort he shook off the drowsiness which was so delicious, and tumbled himself to the floor.

He dressed quickly, with an air of ferocity. That night he walked a number of miles through the sleeping city. He saw, at times, a solitary policeman, or a belated cab blundering through echoing streets. The darkness was hung with a cold gloom. Young Betterton ceased to wonder whether or not he was an ass, and began to take a lively interest in the grave mood of the night. This walk without a goal in the small hours was somehow stimulating. His mind was alert, he looked at the shapeless bulk of the buildings, at the thin, ghastly flares of light on the melancholy corners, and drew in a deep breath. He was beginning to enjoy himself.

No sooner had he made that discovery than he turned his steps obstinately homeward. In half an hour he was in bed again, wide awake now, with nerves rebelling against the sleep that his will ordered.

That first quixotic experiment with the theory produced, of course, a reaction. But soon young Betterton returned to practice his preaching in a

6—Ains,

manner which was less eccentric. In two or three months he climbed gradually forward through a denial of impulses that at last began to resemble his first attempt in their wildness.

To spin out a chronicle of those three months would be purposeless. It is sufficient to name a few of the things he did without surveying them in detail.

He gave up smoking, and, having the habit of many cigarettes, twitched and hungered for two dreary weeks. When, a month later, he no longer craved tobacco, he took it up again. He had no sooner trained his lungs to expect the drug than he once more promptly dropped it.

He gained presently a great reputation for unselfishness. But this he counteracted by occasionally denying his instinct toward courtesy, and proving his ability to be harsh or rude.

Whether or not young Betterton's theory is sound I do not pretend to say; yet there is very little doubt that young Betterton, himself, really did develop a certain admirable hardness of fiber. Like all impulsive, impressionable people he often changed surprisingly in appearance. His face now began to show cleaner lines, his mouth was tighter, his speech more direct.

Vaguely he realized that this was true, but he did not consciously acknowledge the fact. He had taken up the practical demonstration of the theory in the spirit of a game, for he had not lost an ample sense of humor. The seriousness with which he subconsciously pursued it was hidden from his own eyes.

It was near the end of the third month that destiny found him ready for the ultimate test. A letter from his Aunt Ella, with its usual mixture of querulousness and piety, came to his family. Aunt Ella assumed martyred airs at the way her relatives neglected her, and sprinkled her pages with texts.

Young Betterton's family held a

gloomy council. They were kindly, traditional people, and they were loyal to their own blood. In spite of her two daughters, Julia and Dorothy, it was clear that old Aunt Ella was lonely. Some one ought to go West for a brief visit.

It was on this occasion that young Betterton furthered very considerably his reputation for self-sacrifice. For if there was a person whom he found intensely antipathetic, it was Aunt Ella Stone, and yet he volunteered to take the very next week off, and do what must be done.

He brushed aside feeble remonstrances, and that day secured his reservations. He arrived in the mushroom Western city on a Sunday and was immediately hailed off to church. Young Betterton welcomed the ordeal. But it was not until the third day of his stay that he went to the dance at the Skohasset Country Club.

As he stared at Barbara Arthur in the instant that followed her invitation, young Betterton knew that his theory must stand or fall by what he answered. So strong was the desire to know this girl better, that, for a moment, the treason entered his mind that his theory was, after all, a grotesque piece of nonsense.

He regarded that thought as an added force to fight. He put temptation from him with a single, profound effort.

"Thank you," he said formally. "But I am afraid I shall be leaving here long before your sixth dance."

It seemed to young Betterton that he had been a figure in an inanimate tableau which, at his words, broke into human elements with human emotions. He saw his cousins, Julia and Dorothy, gaping at him as if he had done something as extraordinary as suddenly imitating a cat, or turning a cart wheel. He saw the young man before the alcove advance with relieved eagerness.

He saw, last of all, Barbara Arthur's face, her unbelieving eyes, her lips which moved ever so slightly and yet said nothing.

The next instant she was gone. Young Betterton saw her glide into the rhythm of the music with a smiling face that hid a cold, puzzled rage. She was gone. He had bluntly insulted her, a girl in a thousand, in a million. The theory had triumphed. But that was small satisfaction, for she had assumed, in his eyes, that loveliness common to all things that are lost. He swore in his heart, being very sure that he would never see her again.

Being, as I say, very sure of that belief, young Betterton was highly astonished to discover himself, just two days later, sitting within six feet of her, and in such a fashion that any attempt to withdraw to a further distance would probably have broken his neck.

He was rigid beside the driver of a large car which rumbled over a country road, and five people crowded the tonneau behind him. Barbara Arthur was among that number.

This requires explanation. Young Betterton had, as a matter of fact, seen Barbara Arthur on the morning before. She was stepping out of a shop, in the town as he swung by on a stroll. He thought, though he did not know, that his expression slid swiftly into a cool stare as he caught her eyes. She half halted with a seductive hesitation, and young Betterton saw his opportunity for atonement. Perhaps it was habit, perhaps some harsh perversity, which caused him instead to lift his hat in formal salute and pass on without slackening pace.

That afternoon his cousins, the two Stone girls, were thrown into excitement by a telephone conversation. Barbara Arthur called them up to make a suggestion in her sweetest voice. She planned, she said, an all-day drive out

to her Uncle Will's in Clear-River. She had asked Simon Rand and Richie Endicott, and wouldn't they come, too? Oh, and bring an extra man. The post-script, as usual, conveyed the main message.

Julia and Dorothy Stone confronted each other with thoughtful eyes and that evening studied young Betterton with a conscientious attention which would have been a lesson to a maker of maps.

Young Betterton agreed cheerfully to the idea of a motor trip, which he usually abominated, and did not ask questions. So, as he came out of the house early the next day to join the talk and laughter in the big car that had halted there, he was taken aback at the sight of one familiar figure. His pulses leaped, he was aware of high delight, and then he abruptly recalled what his will required of him. It seemed to young Betterton in that instant that the fates had accepted his challenge and were forth to prove him with every device at their command. He set his lips and swore in his heart that he would meet the test. He would oppose a profound inclination with his unconquerable will.

Barbara Arthur held the center of the cushions. The delicacies of arrangement with their fancied favors, of so much importance to women and effeminate men, were still to be settled. One man, of course, must ride with the Arthurs' elderly chauffeur.

"Run into the house, Richie," cried Barbara Arthur, "and get me a magazine, please! If you're all very dull, Julia and Dorothy and I intend to read and be happy."

Richie Endicott grinned and jumped up the steps; at the same instant Barbara pushed away the lap robes next to her and glanced casually at young Betterton.

"Hurry up, everybody! Climb in! It's awfully late!"

Young Betterton gritted his teeth and silently took the place beside the driver.

He had occasion to feel a little ridiculous, like a boy in the sulks, long before the morning was over. He was very silent, only answering a rare sentence flung to him from the rear. But he studied the party with the back of his head, and saw nothing of the long road down which they swept.

He could hear Barbara's light, alluring voice, that never said anything and yet was so distinctly worth listening to on any topic. His cousins were silent, but whether they were awed or merely neglected he did not know. It was more likely the latter, judging from the concerted attention of the two men in the tonneau. Vaguely young Betterton remembered they had been picked for him that morning with the virtues that doubtless made them easy to classify socially.

Simon Rand had brains and money; Richie Endicott was accredited with good looks and charm. Rand's brains seemed to exhibit themselves in a series of slang phrases at which every one laughed mechanically, and Endicott's charm appeared to consist of an ability to bawl a popular song off key with ignorant assurance. Young Betterton cordially detested them both. What the deuce could that rare girl find in either worth thinking about? Yet she laughed, encouraged them, appeared even to respect them. Solitary and morose, young Betterton, with folded arms, held his disdainful peace.

At one o'clock the car halted on a deserted stretch of road, and the party, equipped with hampers and paraphernalia, clambered over a fence into the woods. A few yards further a quiet river broadened into a pool and beside it were the ruins of an ancient homestead.

Young Betterton went moodily into the underbrush for firewood. As he was about to return, he heard the twigs

crackling, and discovered Barbara Arthur.

She came toward him with pale, set face, and spoke with an abruptness which was itself immeasurably appealing.

"Why are you angry at me? What have I done?"

The man felt inclined to go on his knees to her. He had the strongest desire to match her sweet humility with humility still deeper. She, instead of cutting him for his crudeness, was actually pleading as if she were guilty. He wanted to apologize, and it was only by a superhuman effort that he managed to insult her instead.

"Angry at you? Why should I be? Aren't you—just a little self-conscious?"

Barbara Arthur's pride flashed into her face, and her chin went high. She surveyed him with eyes dark with some unspoken comment, and then plunged away from him.

He stood gazing after her as a man might gaze at a priceless vase which he has knocked from its shelf in one insane impulse. He felt as if he had struck her across the mouth. His will had triumphed, but from the sense of that victory he had not any satisfaction.

After the picnic lunch young Betterton found his chosen seat in the car stolen by his cousin, Dorothy. With a wry face he joined Rand and Endicott in the rear.

Barbara Arthur did not look at him, or at least did not meet his eyes. Betterton felt uncomfortable in that chilly atmosphere, and began to talk to conceal the fact. To his surprise he talked rather well. He held his own, and a little bit better, with the garrulous Rand. Barbara, herself, seemed in excellent spirits, and though she never addressed him, young Betterton had a sneaking notion that more than once

she aimed her remarks at an audience of one.

He was without the usual male conceit to a great degree, or by this time he would have begun to enshrine himself as the hero of a girl's shy dreams. Such nonsense was foreign to young Betterton though his wisdom sprang from innocence rather than sophistication.

Barely two hours later the engine of the big touring car sputtered and gasped with a series of short, choking sounds. The chauffeur, after a cursory examination, reported a shortage of gas. He gave the explanation without apology for his carelessness. There was even an odd gleam in his eye when he returned from his examination of the tank. The nearest town was three miles away; he set out calmly to walk and fetch back enough to drive them to a supply station.

Barbara Arthur suggested a saunter through the woods to shake off the cramp of the trip. Young Betterton, thankful for the chance of solitude and his own gloomy thoughts, murmured that he would stay and guard the car and be lazy.

He heard their voices trailing away into the thicket, and was alone at last in an immense and impressive stillness. A few rods away stood a drab farmhouse with an air of sleep which accentuated his sense of isolation.

That spirit was interrupted soon and suddenly. Plunging through the breaks in the undergrowth came a slim, hatless figure—Barbara Arthur. She was alone.

Young Betterton's senses were on the alert. What would she do or say this time? He told himself he could not rebuff her again. Nor could he bear cold reproach. He was relieved to find how casual was her greeting. Apparently she had already forgotten what he could not easily forget; his candid rudeness that noon.

She climbed into the car beside him with an idle air.

"You don't mind, do you?" she said. "I was tired of walking, and I thought it must be pleasant here. So I came back, though I won't bother you."

Betterton glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. Bother him? Great Scott, was the girl making fun of him? Women were like that, he had heard. And he did not answer.

She talked on in a companionable, easy way, and young Betterton listened in puzzled silence.

"Wonder how long George will take to get that gas?" she murmured with a yawn.

Young Betterton glanced toward the farmhouse.

"Why didn't he try that house? That barn has a car in it. They'd probably sell us enough to take us the necessary few miles."

"Oh, you'd never get any gas in a place like that," she said with assurance.

"Think so?" said young Betterton in a voice of irritation. "Watch me!"

He slung himself out of the car, strode up the road and, after a colloquy with a middle-aged woman with the tired, lined face of the farmwife, returned with a small pail of gasoline and emptied it into the tank.

Barbara Arthur watched him without a word from under lowered lids. Then she took the driver's place, and called to young Betterton rather jerkily.

"Well, I hope you're satisfied! Let's go after that chauffeur."

Betterton found himself climbing in next to her, as she stepped upon the starter. With a purr of its powerful engine the great car leaped sharply forward, and went down the road in a veil of dust.

"You're going the wrong way. That man went the other way!" Young Betterton cried above the noise.

She did not answer him. He saw

her face set hard, her eyes narrowed into slits now, peering grimly with some vast determination. He felt as if he were in the hands of a maniac.

"Turn back!" he shouted.

From her lips came crisply two words as sharp as the lashing of a whip:

"I won't!"

She stepped upon the accelerator, and the heavy car plunged on, gathering speed.

Just how fast they were going, young Betterton never knew. He set down the confusion with which the landscape revolved past them as due partly to his own confused sensibilities. He was conscious of many commingled emotions.

This white-faced, frail-looking girl at the wheel of the big car, and himself, wondering what it all meant, made a picture in his mind as remote as if he were disembodied and a spectator.

Reason had no part in him. He had a wild, surging impulse to take this defiant girl in his arms, and beat her down fiercely to obedience.

"Stop!" he cried.

And she laughed—a reckless taunting laugh which was half hysterical.

He put his hand out—he did not know what he planned to do—and saw her wince. She swung the wheel desperately, attempted to swing it back, and then it was too late.

The thing had happened so swiftly that his mind had not yet grasped it. He was conscious only of horror and a dull abstraction.

The big car had plunged into the ditch, stumbling like a live thing, and with all wheels kicking, turned upon one side, catapulting him unharmed to the grass.

With a white, lifeless face, a few feet away, lay Barbara Arthur with her arm caught under her head like a child asleep.



"Oh, God!" said young Betterton to that unsympathetic countryside. "I've killed her!"

He bent, lifted her head, and chafed her hands. Her eyes fluttered open, and in his delight young Betterton kissed her lips.

"You're not dead?" he said foolishly, over and over.

But she only stared at him now with a peaceful and mysterious smile.

"My darling!" he murmured. He babbled like any lover. And she sighed in his arms.

Then young Betterton saw that the fates had triumphed, that his poor little trumpery theory had gone down in the dust. He had lost. He had not been able to oppose his inclination in this ultimate test. Later, he would laugh, and marvel that he had ever entertained anything so preposterous, so bizarre.

But in the chaos of his mood he saw himself now as the most miserable of weaklings. Yet he was not sorry. He felt that he had, after all, his compensation.

Then a single thought came to stir him with a brief, cruel pang. Was Bar-

bara's present compliance merely the effect of shock or pain? Surely he had made no bids for her favor with his studied uncouthness. Surely she could only despise him!

"Barbara," he murmured, "you don't know me yet. I know you don't like me yet. But I'll show you."

She put one soft hand across his mouth.

"You're the only, only man I've ever wanted," she said in a low voice.

Young Betterton unromantically blinked his eyes. Far down the road he beheld dimly, as if seen in a mist, little specks that were his cousins and those two young men. They were running. Why were they running? Why couldn't they leave Barbara and him alone?

His wits came back fumblingly, as from a dream.

"You—you really care for me?" he stammered incredulously. "Why? I don't understand how——" He broke off helplessly.

A fluttering glance accompanied her whisper:

"Because—because you're so strong!"

## TOGETHER

PUT honey out and frosted cakes, and pour  
The tea as though no one of us had gone;  
I'll stop my clock of stars at half past four,  
And we can talk here timelessly till dawn!  
Else you can come and meet me in the nook  
We found once, high above the roofs of town,  
Keeping your laughter and your April look,  
Wearing the sky of evening like a crown.

Oh, let no word of leave-taking be said!  
Bring tulips in and sing the old songs through;  
Let us hold hands as we were wont to do,  
Heedless of who the quick are, or the dead!  
Then, when the world goes dark, we need not be  
Too awkward in our immortality!

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS.

# The Orientation of Mrs. Canning

By Jeannette I. Helm



THE Cannings were going and Mrs. Canning stood, as she always did, waiting with statuesque calm, while her husband made the quick, bright farewells which produced the usual ripples of delighted laughter. I watched her, as I invariably did at these times when the two were thus thrown into relief. On her perfect profile there was nothing to be seen except calm acceptance of her husband's wit and popularity.

There was no doubt that Walter Canning was popular; he was a slender, dark type of man with a sensitive eager face and a winning personality. You felt at once a force in his very hand-clasp, and the buoyancy of a fluid mind in his quick retorts. He was undeniably clever; as undeniably he was a favorite with women without being at all less of a favorite with men. Thereby hung the tale of the Cannings' married life which, while never maturing into scandal, kept a mild sort of gossip going wherever they were. Not that Canning either illtreated his wife or even publicly neglected her; to an onlooker they seemed to get along as well as the average married couple without children. The onlooker would usually observe at this point, "and when one has such a beautiful wife as Mrs. Canning to look at," and gain a mild sur-

prise at the expression which flitted across the face of his listener, a mingling of weariness and amused tolerance.

There could be no denying that Mrs. Canning was beautiful; from the exquisite regularity of her features to the superb slope of her neck and shoulders she was a delight to the eye. Her gowns were always effective and well chosen; her manners perfect; she was everything of a model wife and home maker; but she was dull, hopelessly so. Not once in the memory of Spring Harbor had those perfect white teeth let slip past anything except the most approved platitudes, and one could quite as well expect a miracle as an original thought. The irritating part was that she didn't look stupid; there was a little hovering smile about the chiseled lips that held out alluring promises of humor and a tranquil depth to the eyes that hinted at unseen knowledge. I have seen men, drawn by her beauty, stand and watch with the devotedness of statue worshipers for a sign of either humor or knowledge, and go away at last, utterly depressed by the shallow prattle they had drawn on themselves.

It was not in human nature for a clever man like Walter Canning to be held long by this. He had been madly in love with her when they first came

to live at Spring Harbor two months after their marriage, and this had lasted a year. By that time he knew exactly what to expect from her and gradually he turned to other women for society and appreciation. He wasn't unfaithful to her, so far as we knew, and the odd part was that no one would have greatly blamed him if he had been; by that time we, too, knew what to expect, from Mrs. Canning. Bob Leavitt expressed it for all of us one day at the club when some newcomer was criticizing Canning for going out so much without his wife. Said Bob:

"Hanged if I blame him! I'd as soon take the Venus de Milo around with me; sooner in fact, for she could be checked in the coat room and wouldn't be expected to open her mouth!"

The woman irritated me, for a fact, and I couldn't keep my eyes off her whenever she was around. As I stood thoughtfully watching the delayed farewell on the club piazza, Ferguson joined me. He is a young chap to have already become a famous nerve specialist and he is a good friend of mine, besides. We are both Scotch and devoted to golf and red ties.

"Still on my daughter!" he jeered. "Mac, this love affair of yours with Venus is spoiling an average good golfer. Four good approach shots muffed because of a straight nose and two drives lost for not keeping your eye where it belongs."

"Ferguson," I retorted, "do you or don't you look at Mrs. Canning when she is around?"

"I do whenever I feel like admiring statuary, but when I play golf I watch my ball. Confess now that you were thinking of her when we played this morning."

"Nothing of the sort," I returned. "I had bad luck and you know it. But I'm thinking of her now, I'll admit that. Fergie, that woman is a mystery to me, and a damned irritating one at that."

He watched Mrs. Canning being helped into the car by her husband and their final departure amid a series of snorts and explosions from the motor.

"What makes you think there is a mystery, Mac?"

"I didn't say there was a mystery. I said she was a mystery." I returned irritably. "The mystery is that there isn't any."

"Very clarifying if not lucid. Only you are wrong. She isn't any mystery, but there's one there."

"What do you mean?"

"A woman always holds back something. I don't think Mrs. Canning is as dull as she seems."

I shook my head.

"You've spent so much time poking into people's nervous systems that you think every one has psychic traumas and Freudian wishes concealed about his person. The whole mystery about Mrs. Canning is that she has nothing to conceal."

"Are you sure? E. A. Poe concealed a purloined letter in full sight, if you remember."

"Good heavens! Everything is in full sight with Mrs. Canning, but there's nothing to hide."

"Don't be too sure. You don't know women or you wouldn't believe everything you see."

His calm patronage nettled me.

"If you think you know all about women, why don't you find out for yourself then?"

"My dear Mac, only one man ventured to say that he knew about women and he had one thousand wives. Besides I never take cases when I'm off on a vacation."

"This isn't a case," I urged. "It's a discovery of immense value to science. Think how much help you could be to women in enabling them to know themselves."

"Mac," he interrupted, "if I thought I should ever do that, I would give up

my practice. Think where we should be if women knew as much about themselves as they do about us! The world wouldn't be safe for a moment!"

"Who wants to be safe? I thought you were a good sport."

To my surprise he became suddenly grave and it was an entirely different face he turned to me.

"I'm not so sure, Mac, that any one has a right to interfere. And yet I'd like devilishly well to know if the woman really cares about her husband's neglect; if it's only superb acting or actual indifference. She may be suffering a veritable hell."

"Or giving him one," I interrupted in my turn. I was beginning to be afraid I had gone too far in my suggestion. "Those cold women can be devils when they choose."

"That makes them more interesting as a study. I never find brunettes have any mysteries."

I didn't at all like the trend of affairs. I knew Ferguson's thoughtful air when he was on the scent of a discovery and hastened to do the ungraceful act of facing right about.

"Well, you had the right idea about women being better off not knowing themselves. It's decidedly safer for all of us."

He looked at me with his bright, impersonal smile.

"You said something about my being a good sport, I believe. Well, I'm going to show you I am."

"Good heavens! Fergie, you don't mean to say you have taken me in earnest?" I was now thoroughly alarmed. Alec Ferguson is a tall, handsome chap and he would be a favorite with women if he didn't care more for medicine. I clung helplessly to the tail of the avalanche I had started. "You'll ruin your career and every one else."

He laughed his boyish laugh.

"Don't get excited, Mac. I'm not going to do any Tertium Quid act. My

interest will be purely professional, I promise you."

With that I had to be reassured, but I felt I had made a general ass of myself. If only I hadn't uttered that unwise remark about being a sport! It had only needed that to stir up the risky devil that lurks behind every Scot's impassivity. Well, having fanned the spark—to change metaphor in mid sentence—I wasn't going to be away at the blaze, so I kept Ferguson and Mrs. Canning on view whenever I could and I went off on my golf so much that little Beegles, the club's duffer, nearly beat me two up. Nothing came of my sleuthing that I could see. Ferguson merely watched Mrs. Canning whenever she was around in an impersonal way which would have deceived any one else except me, and Mrs. Canning kept on being Mrs. Canning, beautifully bromidic, with always the little hovering smile which seemed to laugh at itself.

Then one day, when I was passing the Cannings' place on my way to the club, I saw Alec Ferguson's long gray car parked by the curb opposite their entrance. It might not have been exactly sporting, but I immediately brought my own squatty little car in alongside his and hopped out. This might be better worth while than golf and I was going to see all I could. That didn't seem to be very much at that precise moment. Mrs. Canning was sitting before the tea table smiling at Ferguson who was leaning back in his chair watching her carelessly. I doubt if I interrupted any pearls of thought Mrs. Canning might have been uttering. She greeted me pleasantly and Alec gave me an understanding grin.

"It's so good of you to come in," said Mrs. Canning. "It's such a wonderful day that I expected all you men would be out playing golf."

"Golf gets stupid when one is off one's game," I lied naïvely.

"Yes, it's a good plan to stop for

a while and then go back to it fresh—at least that's what Walter says."

"Don't you think anything gets stupid if you do it too long?" asked Ferguson.

"I don't know; I don't get tired of things, easily. But then I don't play golf, you know. I'm not athletic. How do you like your tea, two lumps and some lemon?"

"No, cream, please. I like my tea disguised. Why is it, I wonder, that most men take lemon and rum, and women cream?"

"Do they?" smiled Mrs. Canning. "I hadn't noticed. Most people take it the way they have been brought up to do."

"A bishop I know always takes rum in his tea and Mac, here, who can hit a highball with swift and amazing accuracy takes plenty of cream and sugar. How do you account for that, Mrs. Canning?" asked Ferguson.

"Really, I don't know. It's just a matter of taste, I suppose."

To this day, I don't think she knows why we both suddenly roared. The pleasantly inquiring smile she turned on us stopped us in mid-air.

"Where's Walter?" I asked Ferguson rather feebly.

"Off playing golf. It's such wonderful weather for it, isn't it?"

I felt as if I were playing a game in which you return to the beginning each time. I also happened to know that Walter was not playing golf, but it wasn't in this game to say so. He had passed me in his big Streamline driving a certain Mrs. Stoddard and their destination was *not* the club. I had a sudden conviction just now that if Walter's conduct was kickable, it was also growing more understandable. That any man of his quick mind could stand long for this sort of conversation was beyond belief.

Ferguson gathered himself together first and returned to the charge, if such a militant simile could suit our conver-

sation. It was more like trying to make snowballs out of dry snow that slipped between your fingers.

"Have you heard Mrs. Cam's latest?" Mrs. Cam was the wife of old Colonel Cambert, called "Camembert" and "Cam" for short, and she was as witty and gay as she was ugly. There was a spice of experimental malice in the question, I thought, for Mrs. Cam had long been one of Walter's admirations in spite of the aforesaid ugliness.

"No, what was it?"

Mrs. Canning's tone was pleasantly interested.

"Since the old colonel's gone on the water wagon and come out so strong for prohibition she says she doesn't even dare have a stew for luncheon."

I laughed, but shut up abruptly. On Mrs. Canning's placid, beautiful face there was the same polite, uninterested smile, a smile that dammed up mirth more effectually than any disapproval.

"Mrs. Cambert is so funny," she observed; "but don't you think her gowns are awfully queer?"

It was just what you would have expected her to say, so she said it. Ferguson and I looked at each other and he got up hurriedly. I followed suit.

"Oh, must you go?" asked Mrs. Canning politely. "Won't you have another cup of tea, Mr. Mackenzie? You've only just come."

It was rude of me to keep steadily to my purpose of going, but I had seen something in Ferguson's face which both puzzled and worried me, and I meant to find out what it was at once. Besides ten minutes more of this sort of thing would have crabbed even my disposition.

"Fergie and I have an appointment at the club," I lied brazenly with a flickering eyelid in his direction. "Sorry, but I shall have to run, too."

We left together and went down the steps in silence.

"All right about the club?" I ven-



tured as he jumped into his car. I was relieved when he nodded and drove off in that direction, his face set, but although I drove my little car to its limit I was a full ten minutes behind him in arriving. I found him sitting in a corner of the smoking room and I dropped into a chair with a sigh of relief.

"Whew! I almost left my flivver in sections along the road. You drove like a mad mullah!"

"Did I?" He roused himself with an effort and I could see that his eyes were both abstracted and curiously intent—the look he wore when his cases were going wrong, with the new something added which had puzzled and bothered me. "Give it a name, Mac."

I did and we sat for some moments in silence.

"Well," I asked, "how is the case of the beautiful Mrs. Canning going?"

He made an irritated gesture.

"Going? It hasn't even budged."

"Give it up, Alec. There's as much to find out about that woman as a statue. She just hasn't the makings, that's all."

He shook his head obstinately.

"I can't feel it. There's something there and I've got to find it out. But how?"

"Behold the great woman under-stander baffled," I mocked meanly. "She's only a complete set of platitudes surrounded by flesh."

He paid no attention to my gibes.

"If there were inhibitions, they might be broken down," he muttered.

"Good gracious, man, you are not going to play Svengali and hypnotize her!" I exclaimed.

He looked up at me with one of his sudden smiles.

"Not such a bad idea, Mac. Only Trilby lost her naturalness when she gained her voice and became a statue. Heavens"—he interrupted himself—"what if Mrs. Canning's very beauty had absorbed her character? That's what I've felt all along."

"Well, do you propose to turn her into a hag in order to make her clever?" I suggested flippantly.

"That isn't always necessary. Look at yourself, Mac."

Now, I am red-headed, sandy, and a bit too short for the ideal Greek model, but I'm not stupid. I ignored his slur.

"What do you propose doing then?"

"Ever hear of a drug called cannabis indica?"

"No, but it sounds poisonous. What are you going to do? Make Canning an attractive widower?"

"You are least funny when you try to be, Mac. I told you that one could be both homely and bromidic at the same time."

"And I suppose you consider yourself the sacred combination of good looks and cleverness," I retorted. "Anyway, modesty isn't a feature of it. I object to cannibalism—what's its name? You've got such a damned scientific mind that you don't care what crimes you commit in its name. What are you going to do with this drug?"

"Nothing in the least harmful. Its other name is hashish and a small dose of it simply sends the taker into a half dreamy state where the realities of life become dim and the bars of the soul are let down, releasing all that is pent up in the subconscious. The real being is then apt to appear, often very contrary to what it has formerly been."

He was speaking seriously now, and I became serious, too, for I realized what this meant to him and, perhaps, her.

"But have you any right to do this?"

"Probably not, but isn't it a duty to help a fellow creature express herself? Think what it might mean to Canning if he knew what his wife really was! And I've got to know myself, Mac."

He was fingering his glass with unusual nervousness. I looked at him keenly.

"Isn't that the real reason, after all?"

"Maybe it is, but I've got to do it."

"Suppose it works harm instead of good?"

"I've thought of that, but I can't see what harm can come. The small dose can't hurt her and if nothing comes of it, things will be the same."

"And if something does come?"

"Confound it, Mac!" he burst out irritably. "You're worse than an old woman. I've used the stuff and I know its effects to be temporary. Do you think I'd do anything as a physician that was dishonorable?"

"No, but a scientist never thinks of the human element when he is making experiments. Well, it's your affair and I wash my hands of it. How do you propose doing it?"

"Oh, I don't know yet." He got up restlessly. "I may not, after all. In any case, this is between us."

"You can trust me, I hope!" I answered rather stiffly. He nodded and strode off, leaving me in a mixed mood of dissatisfaction and curiosity. I felt that somehow I had started the whole affair and yet, for the life of me, heartily as I disapproved of it, I couldn't restrain my interest in the outcome. I tried to put it out of my mind, but it bobbed up serenely.

However, nothing happened for a week or more and I began to feel that Ferguson had seen the folly of his course. This should have laid my little devil of curiosity, but he kept on grinning at me each day. It was with a sensation of half-ashamed relief that I read a note from Ferguson left at the club for me.

DEAR MAC: Will you make the sixth at a dinner at my house to-night? Mr. and Mrs. Canning, her sister, Mrs. French, Miss Maxwell, you and I. As you saw fit to question my wisdom, come and see the results. F.

Would I come? I doubt if anything could have kept me away. But I own to a very guilty feeling as I entered

Ferguson's beautiful old Colonial house that evening. He has inherited it from an uncle, lucky dog, together with a good income and a jewel of a butler, so his dinners are usually enjoyable. To-night, however, I felt unpleasantly like a second cousin to the Borgias and hoped fervently that Ferguson would give up his risky scheme. Nothing seemed to have happened. Mrs. Canning, as lovely and calm as ever, was listening to her husband's sallies with Mrs. French, a slight, vivacious brunette, as different from her half sister as possible. I began to feel more at ease until something occurred with the arrival of the cocktails. Ferguson and Mrs. Canning were sitting together not far from me so I heard it plainly. As Ferguson handed her a glass she shook her head.

"This is Martin's specialty," remonstrated Ferguson. "Or have you joined Colonel Cambert on 'the wagon'?"

"No, I like a cocktail," she answered frankly, "but I'm afraid it will make my head worse."

Ferguson was all solicitude.

"Does it ache badly? I'm so sorry. Perhaps it was too much for you to come to-night."

"Oh, no. I felt perfectly well when we started. It only throbs here." She pressed her hand to her temples. "I'm afraid I'll be rather stupid, that's all."

She did look paler than usual, and there was a faint line of pain between her brows.

"Neuralgic, probably," said Ferguson. "Can't I give you something for it? That's my specialty, you know."

She hesitated.

"I almost never take medicine. Still a headache now is a nuisance. Perhaps if you have something simple——"

I caught myself up sharply in a half groan for I dreaded what was coming. Fate seemed playing into Ferguson's hands. Something simple!

Ferguson had already gone to a desk

in the corner and returned with a bottle of tablets.

"These are very simple," he said, "but if you are unused to medicine I'll give you only one. Just take a drink of water afterward. There now, your headache will be gone directly."

I wanted to cry out, to warn and protest, but I did nothing except smile rather sickly. I couldn't even catch Ferguson's eye. He, hardened villain, went on in the same soothing professional voice.

"The only thing I would warn you against is the possibility of a little stimulation. There's a very slight opiate in the tablet and it sometimes acts that way on systems unused to drugs. You may feel like talking a little more than usual."

My indignant eye had caught his at last, but I was met with a calm innocence which infuriated me. Somehow, it also silenced me, and I remained raging but mute.

"I shall probably go to sleep," laughed Mrs. Canning.

"No, I think you will more probably surprise us all," observed Ferguson calmly. "I've seen a man under the influence of a much larger dose turn from an abnormally shy, silent person into the life of the party, and a pillar of the church unveil some very pretty scandals."

"Heavens! I hope I don't do that," she laughed. "How *does* a pillar unveil itself, anyway?"

I pricked up my ears. It was not very brilliant stuff, perhaps, but it was so different from Mrs. Canning's usual manner, that I began to wonder whether the drug already was having its effect. I saw Ferguson glance at her oddly.

"Perhaps if you would be your real self for once, it might be even more exciting."

"How do you know I have any real self?" Her eyes rested on him calm,

thoughtful, but with the little danger gleam in them one sees in a fire opal.

"I am sure of that. Try it and see." There was a gleam in his eyes also which made me wish, nervously, I had never come, and he looked intently at her as he spoke. Yet I would not have missed it for worlds.

Dinner was announced to my great relief and we went in. Our little party was well chosen, as Alec's parties usually were. Mrs. French was bright and witty with a little elfish face that had a charm of its own; Miss Maxwell, healthily handsome, a good shot and a fair tennis player, with an easy-running conversational motor. She also happened to be Walter Canning's latest occupation and I felt that in adding her to the rest, Ferguson had not showed his usual tact. Mrs. Canning was superb, as usual, and as she sat there in an exquisite orchid-colored dress from which her creamy shoulders and neck swept grandly up to her sculpturesque head I couldn't take my eyes off her. It was something more than sheer perfection that held me, however; it was an indefinable sense of stir and feeling behind that snowy skin and calm, perfect outline which made me think somehow of a river I had once seen in Maine just before the March thaw; a dazzling, clear-white expanse silent under the grip of the intense cold, but with almost inaudible little murmurs and shudders as the poisoned forces of the water below began to feel the urge of the spring. Would Ferguson's drug work in the way he had predicted or only pass off and leave the usual calm dullness? I nearly passed by two of Martin's delicious courses in speculation. Still Mrs. Canning was silent and I fancied I caught a disappointed look in Ferguson's eyes. As the host, he was kept busy, and Mrs. French monopolized him in her usual whimsical way so he had little chance, at first, to say much to his other neighbor. He

sat between her and Mrs. Canning; I was on Mrs. Canning's other side; then Miss Maxwell, and then Walter. I tried to start some sort of conversation with Mrs. Canning, but she only smiled at me vaguely and did not even return the usual platitudes, so, wearied at last of throwing these conversational "duds" which failed to explode any discussion, I turned my attention to the rest. The talk became general and then, as it inevitably did, it focused on Walter Canning who loved an argument for it gave him a chance to show himself at his best. They were discussing the early days of the war when the French were making their gallant stand at Verdun and Walter had been defending them from the charge of being unprepared.

"In Paris," said Mrs. French, "everything went on the same: the shops, the operas, and plays. I admire the French, as every one does, but if they were not such a frivolous people, they would have foreseen that blow in time to meet it. It has needed this great lesson to teach the nation that there is more in life than gayety."

"And it needed the gayety to make them ready to face the blow," said Walter. "That's where we misjudged them before the war. We thought their gayety only recklessness; now we know that it was only the polish on their steel."

"What surprises one," interrupted Miss Maxwell, "is that a race of artists like the French should have such power of resistance and self-control."

"Don't you know that art means both sacrifice and self-control? One of our women said 'And who loves beauty must be strong of soul?' The French are strong of soul because they are beauty worshipers and when one has already given up everything for his art, further sacrifice comes easily."

The voice was Mrs. Canning's, but when had we ever heard such words from her lips? I'm afraid we all stared

ludicrously and in silence at her. She, on the contrary, seemed quite at ease except for a slight spot of color on each cheek. Walter Canning was always scrupulously polite to his wife, but when you have been searching for words in which to put an idea it is jolting to have it put both more clearly and effectively by some one you've always thought hopelessly dull!

Ferguson came to the rescue.

"So you think all-beauty means sacrifice?" he asked and there was an excited, almost triumphant glint in his eyes.

"It's a law of nature," answered Mrs. Canning. "You have to pinch off all the shoots of a plant except one to make that perfect, don't you?"

"But doesn't beauty lie in the harmonizing of everything, not in the subordination of all to one?" asked Ferguson quietly.

"There is no beauty without harmony, of course, but how can you get harmony unless you are dominated by one idea, one ambition? A singer gives up everything to the voice without a regret; an actor spends hours of work on a single part; even a great financier has to rule his life rigidly. It seems to me that if you want perfection, success in any line, any art, any characteristic, you must be prepared to give up everything to it; friends, popularity, even life itself."

The woman was transformed. Her whole expression had changed, the river had broken up at last, and her words poured out in a feverish flood. Canning no longer glared, but watched her with puzzled fascination; the two other women were silent and frankly wondering. I couldn't have said a word. Ferguson alone rose to the occasion. Skillfully, unobtrusively, he drew her out with question and sympathetic answer. I won't repeat, even if I could remember, all she said, but it was both brilliant and sound. Gradually, Canning and then the rest recovered from

their surprise and were drawn into the talk, but this time the focus had shifted to Mrs. Canning. Yet, although she was undeniably the center of the conversation, I couldn't help admiring the skill—with which she kept her husband in it also. She brought up topics in which he excelled, and deftly smoothed the path for certain bon mots until I could see Canning fairly radiating in this new effect he was producing. She listened raptly, applauded discreetly, but silent or speaking, she held the stage and we all knew it. Yet no one seemed to care. Mrs. French, after a puzzled, scared look at her sister, even set herself to make opportunities for her as she was doing for Walter, while Miss Maxwell, like a good sport, accepted her eclipse gracefully.

It was the most brilliant dinner I've been at, and at the end we all voted unanimously to take our coffee and cigars on the veranda with the ladies. As we went out I caught part of a muttered remark of Canning's to Mrs. French, "Never saw her like this before—so clever;" and her somewhat caustic reply, "Never had a chance, but Angela's no fool."

I don't know how Mrs. Canning and Ferguson managed to disappear unseen directly after dinner, but they did. I had brought a golfing article to show Canning and discovered that I had left it in my coat upstairs, so I went up to get it. My coat and hat were in Alec's room which opened out on a small porch over the rear piazza from which there was a wonderful view of the river. The moonlight was so beautiful that I stepped outside for a look. As I turned to go in, my foot caught in a vine of trumpet creeper and I came down with my leg twisted under me. It hurt profoundly and for a moment I couldn't speak. I had done it all without much noise as the thick leaves of the vine broke the sound. Now, as I sat there nursing my foot in stricken silence,

Ferguson's voice rose out of the darkness from the piazza below me in startling clearness.

"You were wonderful to-night."

"How?" Mrs. Canning asked.

"Clever, brilliant—just what I've wished you might always be."

"Ah—h!" It was a sigh almost of disappointment rather than pleasure. "You liked me that way?"

"Who couldn't help liking you?" Ferguson's voice had a tenseness that I recognized as a deliberate reining in of emotion. Right here I should have got away somehow, I know, but my infernal foot ached so I dared not move and I doubt if I would have moved anyway. A curiosity stronger than decency held me there listening with all my ears.

"Why didn't you show yourself like this before?" Ferguson demanded abruptly, almost roughly.

"I knew you were going to ask that, you scientist!" she mocked. "Surely you know. You warned me I might talk and I have. But I didn't tell them everything. Why don't you ask why I showed my real self at all to-night?"

Ferguson was silent. She laughed.

"Well, I've a fancy to tell you now. First I want to ask you if you can imagine what sort of a child I was?"

"Very lovely," he answered promptly.

"Not in the least. I was tall, overgrown, with awkward legs and arms, straight tow hair and warts! And I adored beauty—oh, how I adored it—as only a lonely romantic child can. I was taken to see a famously beautiful actress once and when I came home, thrilled with her loveliness, I looked for a long time in my mirror and resolved to be as beautiful. It sounded hopeless, then, for I was an exceptionally ugly child and painfully shy, but the very intensity of my wish seemed to work some change. In any case, at thirteen I had scarlet fever and my hair all came out and grew in again in thick



curls. That was the beginning; I had to live up to those curls! I studied books that told how to walk, eat, and exercise, and no monk ever devoted himself to his service as I did to my looks. Suddenly I began to bloom out like a seemingly dead stalk does in spring; my figure became full and graceful, my features had always been good but too old for my age and now they harmonized. It is possible I might have become all this in any case, but I wasn't satisfied with mere good looks—I wanted to be beautiful. I took great care of my dressing and adopted a classic style of my own which I've held to ever since. I am not wearying you?"

"Go on," breathed Ferguson. If he had not said it, I should have.

"Then I made the great discovery. None of the beautiful women I had read of or met were anything except beautiful, nearly all the clever ones were ugly. Even those most famous in history leaned to one side or the other; Cleopatra had a snub nose and George Sand was downright ugly, while Helen of Troy and Lady Hamilton were admitted fools. You must understand that I am talking of beauty alone, not charm, wit, or play of expression, which so often passes for such, but the perfect beauty of face and form. And, as I said to-night, to get perfection in any way one must sacrifice all to it, as I did. Emotions make wrinkles, so I never allowed myself to laugh or to cry and, as passions are equally disastrous to a smooth unruffled face, I had to avoid love and hate. I found this very hard for I was quick to respond to both. I ate only what would make and keep a perfect skin and I ruled my life absolutely with one object, one aim, and that I attained."

There was a moment's silence while I waited in an agony of impatience for Ferguson's reply. It came in a quiet colorless voice.

"Were you happy when you did attain it?"

"No one is ever happy with anything. That's a platitude, I know, but I've said them so long that I fall unconsciously into the habit. I discovered that platitudes save such a tremendous amount of thinking, and thinking is bad for the looks."

"Please forget them for once," he begged, "and tell me truly, are you happy?"

"I was at first. I enjoyed being beautiful, stared at, and talked about; then the novelty wore off and I began to feel the limitations with which I had bound myself. It isn't easy to be serenely stupid when you could make as clever speeches as any one else, but I got so used to it in time that when I tried to be anything else I felt awkward and nervous. So I stopped trying or caring."

"Then why did you try to-night so successfully?" Ferguson's voice had an eager unusual note in it. "Was it because you—cared?"

"Yes." The answer was clear and half defiant. I strained my ears to hear Ferguson's next words which came low and intense.

"You cared for some one's opinion more than for your looks?"

"Yes."

"Whose?"

I know I should have crept away, evaporated if need be at that moment, but I couldn't. Her answer came without any hesitation.

"Walter's."

"Oh!" Ferguson's voice was unnaturally dry. Mrs. Canning's was both tremulous and triumphant as she went on.

"I've told you much, but you are clever enough to have seen and guessed the rest for yourself. Walter married me for my looks and I was glad that it was so. It was the best I could give him and it seemed reward enough

for all my years of effort and self-denial. He was so brilliant, so clever himself that there seemed no need of anything on my part but to look my best. He said so and I believed him." She laughed a little bitterly. "I found out better. He tired of my beauty in a year and then, when I realized it and tried to give him something else, I couldn't. All the years I had spent in repressing disturbing emotions had their revenge; I couldn't change, I had to keep on, longing all the time to show him that other side of me that I knew was there. Oh, I have paid the full price! Nature always sees to that! I had to look on and smile while he went to other women for the mental companionship I should have been able to give him. He thought me lovely and stupid, like all the rest." She paused with a dry sob.

"But you aren't at all stupid," cried Ferguson. "You've proved that tonight, to him—to all of us."

"Yes, he knows now," she exulted. "To-night, somehow, the bars were broken and I could be myself at last. But I'm afraid, so afraid that to-morrow I shall go back to the old repression. Tell me—you are a doctor and you should know—is this really me at last, or am I only acting something in a semidream caused by the drug you gave me and to-morrow I shall wake to find myself the same hopelessly dull woman again?"

There was a tragic passion in her voice which moved me deeply. I cursed Ferguson for his experiment with the beastly drug. Its effects were temporary, so he had said; when they had worn off, wouldn't she be all the worse for it?

Ferguson was speaking now and I listened.

"Mrs. Canning," he said, and there was a vibrant power in his voice I had never heard before, "this is not a dream, but a reality, and you have

broken the bars for good. You have brought your subconscious self out into the open and from now on it will be free. As a doctor, I swear it."

"Thank God!" It was scarcely more than a murmur, but a fervent one.

"Only," he went on solemnly, "if you really want to keep your husband's love, to be a normal happy woman, live and live hard without a thought of wrinkles or figure. You've made a Moloch of your beauty and offered up all you loved to it. For God's sake, break all your mirrors and be human while you can!"

"I will, I will." She was half crying now and I judged this was the time for me to leave. Fortunately they had been moving away slowly while they spoke, and so I was able to crawl off without any discovery. The only glimpse I had of them was Mrs. Canning catching gratefully at his hand, and Ferguson's face as he looked at her. That look made me very uneasy. Was this experiment going to affect more lives than one?

I got myself in shape with the aid of Ferguson's man and some arnica, and hurried back to the others as soon as I could. Having had a box seat for this performance, I didn't propose to lose any of it.

I found the Cannings preparing to go and I couldn't help contrasting this leave-taking with the one I have first described. Now, it was Mrs. Canning who, with the same feverish brilliancy she had shown all evening, was bringing the response of appreciative laughter, while Canning stood waiting, her cloak in his hands and the same half-puzzled, wholly fascinated look on his face. I didn't blame him. It isn't very often that a man who has married a beautiful woman suddenly finds her to be extremely clever as well. If Mrs. Canning was wise enough to keep him guessing over this change—and from what I had heard that night, I knew she was capable of much wisdom—there

was no doubt of the firm hold she would have over her husband's fickle feelings. She could have had me for the asking, I know.

"Good night, Dr. Ferguson, and many thanks," she said giving him her hand. "It has been a wonderful evening. My headache is gone and I feel so happy. Something must have cut my 'chattering string.' I'm afraid I've talked you all to death. You should have stopped me, Walter."

"I could listen to you, forever, Angela," he answered simply.

She gave him a sudden look of affection which transfigured her whole face. Was it my imagination, stirred by what I knew, or did I already see two faint lines on her smooth brow which had not been there before? And yet she had never looked lovelier than now!

As they went out with Mrs. French and Miss Maxwell, I turned involuntarily to Ferguson.

"Well," I exulted, "you've done it!"

"Yes, I've done it." He seemed far from exultant himself as he stood there. His face looked tired and his eyes dull. Absently he picked up a cigarette and lit it.

"It was wonderful to-night, the utter change in her," I babbled on. "Fergie, you are a wizard. Only what will happen when the drug wears off?"

"The drug?" He turned an almost stupid face toward me.

"The hashish, that tablet you gave her. You told me the effect was only temporary."

Still he stared at me stupidly. Then his face cleared.

"Oh, I see! So you think the drug did it. Do you know what I gave her?"

"No. I supposed you were carrying out your plan of giving hashish. I heard you warn her it might have a stimulating effect."

He regarded me with almost a look of pity.

"This is what I gave her."

He picked up a bottle from the table and handed it to me. On the label I read:

Aspirin, five grains.

"But," I stammered, "I thought—"

"Exactly. You thought as she did. Did you really imagine that I was going to take advantage of her being in my house to administer a dangerous drug?"

His lofty morality stung me.

"But you suggested it yourself!" I exclaimed indignantly.

"Yes, I know, but a little reflection showed me I was wrong. What I did do was to give just a harmless medicine, but in reality I gave her much more than that. Mac, you surely know that the most powerful medicine in the world is suggestion used at the right moment. All doctors employ it for legitimate ends, and I considered this one, so when I gave her the idea that this harmless aspirin might make her talk, I unlocked the door of her silence more effectively than any amount of drugs could have done. She was ready to talk, anyhow, and very little did it. The result fully justified me, don't you think?"

"Indeed, yes," I agreed; "and I'm glad it wasn't through any drug. But what else did she say?"

"Everything I needed to hear. I respect that woman, Mac. She has had the courage to deliberately choose out her line and stick to it in spite of all human weaknesses and temptations, and that has been a sign of greatness from Cæsar on down. Suppose he had given in to a weakness for literary style and embellished his commentaries, as he doubtless could—where would have been his reputation for military simplicity? The great man has invariably taken one line and hung on, one pose and consciously molded his whole life to it. And that's why I respect Mrs. Canning."

"What do you mean?" I asked, although I knew well what he meant.

"That I was right when I said Mrs. Canning's beauty had absorbed everything else. To attain and keep it, she deliberately sacrificed all feelings and pleasures, love even——"

"And now she has that," I interrupted foolishly.

"Yes, she has that," he repeated dully. "Canning will adore her from now on even if she only gives him an occasional sample."

"It's wonderful!" I exclaimed again. "How did you ever guess she had so much concealed cleverness?"

"It sometimes takes much cleverness to be consistently dull," he remarked dryly. "And, if you remember, it was you, Mac, who gave me the idea of using suggestion."

"Anyway, she owes you a lot," I persisted, trying not to show how foolishly flattered I was.

A curious change swept over his face. I can only compare it to the effect a drifting cloud makes over a mountain-side, blotting out all the sunshine and leaving it dull and blank.

"A doctor always helps when he can. By the way, you will have to call off

that game to-morrow. I'm leaving to-night at twelve."

"What rotten luck! A big case, I suppose? Put it off! I thought you were on your vacation until September."

"It is a big case, one I can't put off. Kinsey of the State Hospital wants me to go with him to Russia and study conditions there. We sail to-morrow."

"You're going to Russia?" I gasped. "Into that hell?"

"Hell has no particular locality, my dear man. I've been wanting to go and do my share for some time; the chance came, so I took it. Come in while I pack, won't you?"

I saw him off later on the train, and went home feeling dazed and depressed. I was fond of Ferguson and I knew I should miss him exceedingly. That he would do a man's work, I knew, but would it be with a man's hope? An insistent memory of looks and words brought up a harassing question: after all was not the orienting of Mrs. Canning due more to the heart than the head, and who had suffered most? I still wonder.

## MARRIAGE

AS two who, lured by fair mirage,  
May find the luring less than truth,  
And sweet the springs beneath the palms,  
And days as gold and flower'd as youth,  
We serve the common fanes of life,  
The roof, the hearth, the guarded door  
Of home, and find in days and nights  
All love had promised us—and more.  
Yet cynic souls and delicate  
Would name our house of life a snare—  
Our house we raised to shield from men  
What only poets and gods may share  
Of love dream-crowned, of love fulfilled  
In tenderness, serenities—  
*And you that hid, and you forbid,  
What know you of these?*

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.



# The Killer

By Hughes Cornell

Author of "Random Shot," "The Hidden Garden," etc.



THE sob sisters exploited it from the first. Soon the whole city—county seat of a populous orchard valley in middle California—was agog over the pink-and-white complexion of this woman who calmly announced that she had shot her husband in the back. Killed him while he slept.

She had reported by telephone to the sheriff, dressed herself, and waited all alone while he drove twenty miles up into the mountains to arrest her. The coroner accompanied him to take charge of the body.

The complexion was averred to have been in evidence when the coroner arrived, and to have justified at least seventy-five per cent of the next day's journalistic raptures. It was healthily white, that complexion, with a soft, unvarying rose-pink area on either cheek, beneath the skin. A faint dusting of rice powder took off the shine.

Mrs. Bardick's eyes were discovered to be gray; not overlarge, but sizable, with tiny black lines raying out from a pupil of normal diameter. The full, smooth lower lids caressed the edge of each gray iris even when her eyes were raised, as they much of the time were on account of her short stature. Her gaze had always been direct and serene, when not sparkling with fun. There was serenity in it now, though no sparkle of fun. The black, recurved upper

lashes rested effectively back against her full white upper lids; candid eyes, as can be seen by the description, although the sob sisters tried "inscrutable." But that implied a hardness, incompatible with the low, full, feminine white brow, guiltless of lines as the temples were of crow's-tracks. No—"inscrutable" was negated by their frank cordiality; so "mysterious" was tried out, and stuck. Perhaps because all felt it a mystery how they could maintain their placidity and feminine effectiveness after having taken in the horrific sight on the broad bed of that sumptuous chamber of death. It had been a shotgun. Short range.

Brought to the county seat, Mrs. Bardick, after immediately offering Bardick's will for probate, at eleven o'clock told her brief story to the coroner's jury, and went to prison without making application for bail. Her one request was for an immediate hearing; her plea, self-defense. Her story recited that her husband, Howard Bardick, had abused her for two hours that evening, choked her into unconsciousness, pointed the gun at her a number of times, and threatened to shoot. He was half drunk and she had finally calmed him sufficiently to get him to bed. Ostensibly half asleep, he had suddenly become more ferocious, she alleged, and, at the point of the gun,



had threatened, in his jealous rage, to shoot her. Also, more than once he had choked her. Apparently worn out by his own fury he had reached out and stood the gun beside the open front window, muttering that he'd take a little nap first, but that if she moved he would wake and choke her to death. Shooting was too good for such as she. He fell faster asleep than he intended. She edged, bit by bit, over her bed rail to the floor, then crept full length to the window, intending to take the gun, climb out, and go to Richard Bardick's. He moved, awakening, threw out one hand, and discovered her absence. She seized the gun and fired in self-defense. She admitted, on question, that his fury had been the result of unwarrantable jealousy, but declined to give details.

The entire county was up in arms, especially the small town of Sequoia, halfway between the Bardick ranch and the county seat. Mrs. Bardick at first declined press interviews. But San Francisco papers headlined the killing, and local public opinion settled upon one of two men living in Sequoia as the individual of whom Howard Bardick had been "unwarrantably" jealous—James Canavan, a married man, and Seward Gaines, a bachelor.

Both were grape buyers. Both had dealt with Howard Bardick for years and had frequently called at his house during the contract season. Canavan had been seen making a call on Mrs. Bardick early on the evening of the tragedy, when Bardick had been scheduled as toastmaster at an Elks' smoker in Sequoia. It would presumably keep him away until midnight. Mrs. Bardick owned the home vineyard on the mountainside back of the pretty chalet which had been built according to her plans; her wedding gift—some whispered, her purchase price. A small red chalet backing a white marble Cupid from whose quiver shot up a dazzling jet of snow water, to fall tinkling back

into the polished sea-shell basin of pink Colusa granite; or to be shattered by blustering cañon breezes out over the small, brilliantly green grassplot below the living-room and bedroom windows.

Of late years Cupid's quiver had been empty much of the time, and the grassplot had worn thin in spots. Along its yellowed edges aboriginal redwoods thrust their undaunted spires a couple of hundred feet skyward, interspersed with sturdy, low-growing manzanitas, whose stiff, pale-green leaves were effectively set off by the garnet-red bark to which they clung. Slender, red-boled madrona trees sweetened the air with their pendent panicles of miniature ivory bells. To either side, up and down the boulevard, above which the chalet stood isolated on its high, precipitous bank, stretched an almost impenetrable, wild growth of chamiso and chaparral, sky tinted in early spring by fragile, billowing masses of fragrant mountain lilac. Back of the house the famous vineyard started its ambitious climb toward the rounded summit of the low range. The new bride had thought its seclusion wonderful six years before, shutting off as it did even the shabby ranch house, a half mile down the road, of Richard Bardick, the deceased man's only child, married now himself, with three children of his own.

It was common knowledge that Richard had hated his stepmother always. Some said he could not recognize a woman of her more-than-hinted amatory record in the place of his own mother, broken down in the arduous upbuilding of the now notable property. Also, the strength and enthusiasm of his own adolescence and early manhood had gone into the evolution of this model vineyard, and some part of it should rightfully have come, in course of time, to himself and to his children, even though, on his youthful marriage, his father had deeded him the

small mediocre ranch which he now worked.

Father and son rarely spoke except in business conferences, with Mrs. Bardick invariably present. She had always spoken smoothly and a bit tenderly to Richard, as she spoke to all men—even to her drinking brute of a husband whose cellar stock seemed inexhaustible. Her full, generous red lips, deeply double pointed, but too wide to be designated as cupid-bow or rosebud, had ever a nascent smile about their deeply indented corners, which took more or less completed form when she spoke. That intolerably ready smile Richard particularly hated, even worse than he hated the sharp edge where the red of her lips met the healthy white of her skin, or the round dimple in her strong, sensuously rounded chin.

Neighbors predicted that some day Richard would "get even on her, if she didn't step mighty careful." But Mrs. Bardick was a very careful woman when she stepped. The last year or two she had seemed to drift.

## II.

It was the *San Francisco Overlook* which eventually demonstrated the third side of the suspected triangle. It sent a special reporter to Sequoia who interviewed both the men referred to and elected to blazon the name of James Canavan as the man of whom Bardick had been "unwarrantably" jealous. That brought immediate results. Canavan went after the reporter with his own gun. Blood spilling was prevented only by the intervention of Seaward Gaines, who created a new sensation by stating that he had been present when Howard Bardick came home that night, about nine. He had left immediately, as Mr. Bardick had been in no condition to talk business. He had ridden straight home, dressed, and at-

tended the Elks' smoker, where he had remained until news came of Howard Bardick's death. Naturally, he had left it to Mrs. Bardick whether or not to bring in his name.

His statement was universally accepted. It fitted in with certain lately prevalent rumors. He was admired for exonerating Canavan at the price of attracting suspicion to himself. But then, everybody said, Gaines was too good a sport to let another undergo suspicion in his place. Gaines, showing the strain somewhat, went competently about his business, refusing further interviews.

"Why did you not mention Mr. Gaines' call?" the sob sister who had started the complexion vogue inquired in her immediate interview; the one next following the interview which celebrated the smooth white pillar of Mrs. Bardick's throat and speculated sadly upon the possibility of its being more terribly defaced than even by the cruel black-and-blue marks now in evidence, which had begun to turn greenish in spots. No wonder Mrs. Bardick had stipulated for an early trial. Those spots would be her best advocates before a jury. There was one abrasion, slightly infected. Howard Bardick had worn his finger nails foppishly long and sharp.

Mrs. Bardick pleasantly replied:

"Since no jealousy of me was warranted, it would have been unkind to bring in the name of any man. I am not on trial for immorality, but for shooting in self-defense. I am defending the inborn right of every living creature, good or bad, to kill in self-defense."

"Even—by premeditation?"

"Premeditation is the surest weapon of self-defense. If you are threatened by a mad dog, you get a gun and, with premeditation, go out and kill it."

The mad-dog simile took, in view of

that wicked abrasion on Mrs. Bardick's soft, white neck. The sob sister immediately reduced it to pothooks.

In the sob sister's very next interview, conducted in the matron's parlor—now a conservatory packed with the cut flowers inevitably unloaded on all alleged murderers awaiting trial—Mrs. Bardick finally "talked." She said she had been warned not to, which had decided her to do so.

"There should be nothing hidden or mysterious about my case. The public has the right to absolute truth."

The sob sister hastily deleted all that about Mrs. Bardick's abundant bright brown hair, loosely tossed back in natural half waves and done in a knot at the neck; also about the straight, firm line of her nose which, with its not unpleasantly fluted nostrils, was the least feminine trait in her face.

"You've got it dead to rights," the sob sister encouraged. "If the public is to know the absolute truth, it is surely up to you."

"I do not care for slang," Mrs. Bardick charmingly reproved. "One keeps so much closer to plain truth by talking plain English."

Ripping! Mrs. Bardick's physical charms—and charm—had been exploited to rags. New stuff was needed to back up the unimpeachable complexion.

"Why do you insist on conducting your own case?" led out the sister, glad enough to abandon the sob stuff, poor girl.

"I cannot permit legal quibbles, even in my own favor, to confuse the judgment of those who are to decide my human rights."

"But the judge has appointed Attorney George Rankin to assist you—"

"To assist me, yes. But I am to conduct the case. Mr. Rankin's position is advisory only." Her voice was sweetly gracious, as it always was where men were involved. "My conduct of the

case will be a simple narration of the facts."

"You maintain that Mr. Bardick's jealousy was unfounded?"

"Absolutely. No man could speak to me or look at me without arousing Mr. Bardick's unreasoning jealousy."

"I have heard that," encouraged the busy sob sister. "Also, that men have often called when you were alone."

"In the mountains a ranch woman is left much alone, when she has neither children nor house servants."

"You did your own work?"

Mrs. Bardick glanced, understanding, at her beautifully kept hands.

"Cooking and the light housework. A Jap comes over once a day from the berry garden."

"Did the strawberries come from the Jap garden?"

This was a venture on sheer rumor. She hoped to startle Mrs. Bardick's mysterious eyes, but in vain.

"Yes," Mrs. Bardick replied reminiscently, "they raise quite wonderful berries."

"And you had been stemming them that evening, to eat with cream?"

"To soak in sugar. Mr. Bardick liked them that way. I suppose the sheriff must have noticed the dishes. I expected Mr. Bardick home early and was preparing the berries for him. Mr. Gaines came about the grape contract and we had a dish apiece while he waited to see Mr. Bardick."

"I understood you expected Mr. Bardick to stay to the Elks' smoker?"

"So he told me," she replied meditatively. "But at the door he turned to say he couldn't trust me out of his sight that long; that he would not go to the smoker. Mr. Canavan called, but decided not to wait on an uncertainty. Then Mr. Gaines came and waited a half hour on the chance. Both were keen after the grape contract. Mr. Bardick, in coming back, took a short cut below Richard Bardick's home and

scrambled up a steep horse trail, through the brush, which brought him to the back of the house, about nine."

"You all say 'about' nine, 'about' half-past eight. Why are you not exact?"

"None of us had any especial reason to watch the clock," Mrs. Bardick answered composedly. "Mr. Bardick returned about nine."

"And found you eating strawberries and cream with Mr. Gaines, in the kitchen."

"Yes, the kitchen is very nice. We often eat little snacks out there. Mr. Bardick became unjustifiably angry. He went into one of his violent rages—everybody up there knows about them—and ordered Mr. Gaines to leave. Mr. Bardick went into the bedroom to get his shotgun. I told Mr. Gaines there would be murder if he stayed and I'd be the victim, as Mr. Bardick had often threatened to kill me."

"Had any one ever heard Mr. Bardick threaten to kill you?"

"Yes."

"Whom will you call as witness to that?"

"It will all come out in the trial. I am not trying my case in the newspapers. I convinced Mr. Gaines and he left. When Mr. Bardick came back he dropped the gun and sprang at me. That's when he first——" She pointed to the evil marks on her throat. "He thought he had choked me to death, but I came to just as he finished telephoning some one, I don't know who. He made terrible threats!" Truth spoke through those even words. "He said that the next time I'd stay dead, but first he'd keep me suffering a few hours, to find out how it felt; a quick death was too easy a punishment for me, he said. After we went to bed he kept threatening me until finally he dozed for a while. When he awoke and missed me I knew my time had

come. I got hold of the gun and, in an agony of fright—fired," she ended with a slight sob.

Twice now had Mrs. Bardick gotten her story sympathetically before the public, from whom must be chosen the twelve men who would decide her fate.

All over the State the journalistic consensus seemed to be that possible or even proved marital infidelity could not deprive any human being of the right to kill in self-defense, except in opposing due process of the law. Another point discussed was whether fear of death was legally equivalent to danger of death. Any husband-murderer could claim fear of death. Should it stand, unless substantiated by outside evidence? Would Seward Gaines' testimony be sufficient? Would the throat marks settle the question?

### III.

On the day of the trial, Pleasant Way, a narrow, alleylike street along the six-foot sidewalk upon which Mrs. Bardick and her escort must walk the half block from prison to the criminal court, was jammed by six in the morning, blocked solid by nine. Mounted police cleared and roped off the middle of the sidewalk, leaving a narrow foot-way next to the buildings, which instantly became a wall of human, and inhuman, spectators. The bailiff went armed in front of his convoy, but the crowd seemed in a tolerant, even semi-humorous mood.

"Shure I'd a shot down anny man who'd put them marks on me t'roat," was well, if jestingly, received. "A bad woman has as much right to live as a bad man," contributed a serious short-haired girl with glasses; cult or "intellectual" type. "There's been many a damned business against Howard Bardick's record," a male voice offered. "But he'd have been let off for killing in self-defense. Why not his wife?"

She couldn't possibly have been as rotten as Bardick, no matter what she did."

Mrs. Bardick's prompt offering of the will for probate, previous to appearing before the coroner's jury, tickled the crowd. "I like the cheek of her," one man chuckled. "Shows she's a law-abidin' citizen." "Within her legal rights," another concurred. "I wonder——"

And out of the seething mass of a whole county of such wonderers the veniremen had been drawn. From them would be selected the twelve who must decide whether Ruth Bardick were guilty of murder in the first degree.

The prison doors opened. Mrs. Bardick appeared with her suite of bailiff, policemen, and reporters. She was short, but she eclipsed them all in visibility. Every eye turned to the lauded complexion.

"Peaches and cream," murmured some one ecstatically. "Strawberries an' cream," came a low jeer from a slanted mouth corner. "Pretty expensive strawberries!" ran a whisper of mirth. "Makin' love to another man's wife ain't all cream," some one carried it on. "I'm sorry for Gaines," said one man, seeking to check the leering witticisms. "I ain't!" snickered a foul-mouthed gutter type.

Mrs. Bardick, pleasantly unconscious, chatted with her escort. The turn-back linen cuffs and collar were—sob sister—immaculate; her trim coat suit and hat all chic; her natty black gloves and pumps perfection. Her black silk hosiery gave out pearly gleams as she walked with a pleasing litheness in her swing.

In court she took her seat at the council table, beside her slightly overawed legal adviser. Her chair proving not altogether comfortable, the bailiff got her another and a footstool, for which she was charmingly grateful.

Then she looked squarely up at the judge and the district attorney. Her lips curved a bit at their indented corners, her hands curved softly where they lay, ungloved, on the table. Her black upper lashes curved back against their full white lids. She was a creature all curves and feminine charm.

She cordially accepted all jurors without objection and with but one question:

"Do you believe that a woman has the same right to shoot in self-defense as a man?"

At first it sounded simple, but by its twentieth unvarying repetition it became portentous. The district attorney showed a preference for fruit and vine growers; ten of the jurymen chosen were married. Twelve might have given basis for an appeal. No women jurors.

So unimpeded was the course of justice that by noon the jury was in the box and the district attorney had opened the case for the People of the State of California with a vicious tirade of accusation, in which he carefully avoided the name of Seward Gaines, yet cleverly brought him before the consciousness of all. A nemesis of cleverness; for James Canavan was the first witness for the prosecution, immediately after the noon recess. His manner was antagonistic to Mrs. Bardick and evinced soreness on his own account.

A smallish, easy-natured man, James Canavan, but to-day he loomed a full six feet to his audience, in reverent recognition of his unexpected gunplay.

After the oath Canavan respectfully addressed the judge.

"Am I permitted to ask instruction from the Court?"

"State your question."

"Is the prisoner on trial regarding her marital fidelity?"

"No."



"Am I on trial for possible immorality?"

"Certainly not."

"Your honor"—Canavan drew himself to full height—"with all due respect to yourself and nowise in contempt of this court, I hereby decline to answer any question regarding my moral character or that of any other person. Had it not been for the generosity and loyalty of a business rival, Mr. Seward Gaines, I should have been disgraced, perhaps criminally, involved in this atrocious affair. If the business calls of Mr. Gaines and myself upon Mrs. Bardick on the night of the shooting subject us to suspicion, I call the present jury to witness that no fruit buyer in the district is safe in pursuance of his daily business. Not one of us but, a number of times a week, drives up to some lonely ranch house during the absence of the husband, and frequently goes in to discuss business with the wife—one of those decent, faithful, hard-working wives who are the pride of our countryside and the mainstay of our nation." The judge suppressed a round of applause. "Any aspersion on the moral character of such business men as Seward Gaines and I is equally an aspersion on every decent rancher's wife in California. In every such instance there is opportunity for crime. But my lawyer, here present, informs me that opportunity for crime does not legally constitute crime. Therefore, with all due respect to the court, I make this statement:—Should any aspersion—direct or indirect, as in certain veiled references to Seward Gaines in the district attorney's opening speech—be cast upon my reputation, my lawyer will immediately open suit against the State of California, through this district attorney's office, for defamation of character."

He seated himself in the witness chair and crossed his legs.

"Your personal rights will be pro-

tected," announced the judge. "We are here solely to decide whether the prisoner's alleged fear for her life was warranted, and whether the alleged method employed comes under the head of justifiable self-defense."

Canavan's testimony was a repetition of what everybody knew. He had not seen Howard Bardick either on the road or at the smoker. Mrs. Bardick had claimed to be expecting her husband at any time. The district attorney haggled some as to precise dates, but Canavan could only approximate within a quarter of an hour. When asked about Gaines he replied:

"He was at the smoker a little before ten, when I arrived. As he was toastmaster in Bardick's place, I saw him continuously until after eleven, when the news of Bardick's death came by telephone."

Mrs. Bardick quietly passed the witness, who had not once looked her way.

The coroner next testified that rigor mortis had not set in when the body was first examined, also that in cases—like this—where there had been much hemorrhage the time elapsing before the appearance of rigor mortis was broadly variable.

Seward Gaines came next. Like Canavan, he did not look toward the prisoner. He was a handsome man in the thirties, wholesomely bronzed by outdoor life, athletic in his carriage. Mrs. Bardick observed him with her habitual equanimity.

His testimony was bald repetition. Gaines had left, on the urgent representation of Mrs. Bardick that Howard Bardick would kill her in case Gaines stayed. All details agreed perfectly with Canavan's and Mrs. Bardick's statements.

At the first insinuation by the district attorney concerning Gaines' personal relationship with Mrs. Bardick, he replied:

"Once for all I will state that our relationship was purely that of business. Mrs. Bardick is the owner of the home vineyard."

The judge ruled question and answer irrelevant and they were stricken off the record. The audience noted Gaines' ignoring of Mrs. Bardick and recalled favorably that he had become implicated only by his loyalty to a fellow business man.

A few more careful, sardonic questions and he was dismissed.

Mrs. Bardick passed the witness and he left the room. Canavan, however, remained with his attentive lawyer.

Richard Bardick took the chair. The anger and repulsion on his dark features as he, like the other two, avoided glancing at the prisoner, registered with the audience.

He testified that he had not seen his father pass up the road homeward that evening. Seward Gaines passed down, townward, somewhere about nine. Howard Bardick was at that moment calling over the telephone to inquire if he, Richard, had seen Gaines going down the road. Richard had looked out, seen Gaines loping past, and so reported to his father.

"Why did your father ask that question?"

Richard's sullen face grew darker.

"I don't know."

"What did you suspect?" This was ruled out.

The district attorney substituted:

"Did his voice sound angry?"

"Yes."

"Unusually so?"

Richard hesitated. The audience grew tense.

"Yes," he admitted finally.

The district attorney tacked.

"Did you hear a shot at any time that night, after talking to your father over the telephone?"

"No, I could not. The house is half a mile away, closed in by thick

shrubbery and trees. Vines over the bedroom window."

The district attorney sensed that something was getting by him; but not through Richard, who hated Mrs. Bardick with all the black Bardick blood in his veins. But in those veins ran, also, the blood of a God-fearing, truth-telling mother. Richard Bardick was not altogether a safe witness from the prosecution's point of view.

Mrs. Bardick conducted the cross-examination.

"Richard," she asked gently—and his face grew purplish red, his hands clenched on his knees—"did you ever stop your father from choking me?"

"Yes." The audience gasped at the dull ferocity of his reply. Every eye flew to the changing discolorations of that round, white throat.

"Did you think I was dead?"

"For a minute."

"Did you ever hear your father say he would kill me?"

"Yes."

"More than once?"

"Yes."

"On what provocation did he state he would kill me?"

"He said"—a passion of accusation broke through the hatred in his reply—"that if he ever came home and found you alone with a man in the house, he would kill you!"

There was an awed hush. Then the gentle voice resumed:

"Did he ever find me so?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Was your father ever jealous of your mother?"

"Always!" groaned the baited man. He sprang violently from his chair and strode out, unhindered.

After some futile questioning of neighbors who, perhaps stirred by memories of Bardick's essential cruelty to his first wife, were vaguely sympathetic with his second, the district attorney decided to concentrate on cross-

examination of the defense witnesses, whose names had not yet been given out. He unexpectedly turned to the judge.

"The People rest."

#### IV.

Mrs. Bardick opened with a short statement that her case was solely one of justifiable self-defense, that the legal presumption was of innocence, which could be subverted only by proven facts. She took the witness chair, cheerfully grave, and underwent with pleasant equability the vicious grilling of the district attorney, undisturbed even by his sarcasm concerning the strawberry episode, which the judge promptly quashed.

The jury did not appear to notice. As Mrs. Bardick sat half turned to face them and the prosecutor, the jury seemed studying the changeable reddish-purple discolorations above the modestly turned-down neck of her white georgette blouse. The spots were degenerating, here and there, into a sickly greenish yellow. The abrasion was healing nicely beneath a dull-red crust. Occasionally the jurors studied her eyes, journalistically characterized as "mysterious"—because of their candid gaze. To the district attorney they were the transparently veiled eyes of an animal on guard.

As she walked back to the table her eyes met, for the first time, the thousand other eyes focused on them; met them with trustful lucidity. Her lips were pleasantly closed, showing indented corners. Utter stillness was punctuated by the tap-tap of her trig French heels. It was not until she had settled herself in her chair and the judge had said something about producing the first witness for the defense that the crowd came out of its daze. Mrs. Bardick was again on her feet.

"Your honor," she announced in her

carrying, agreeable tones, "the witnesses for the defense have all been produced—by the prosecution. The defense rests."

A faint shuffling was audible as Mrs. Bardick, in seating herself, rearranged her footstool more comfortably.

Followed a brilliant specimen of the district attorney's celebrated closing arguments, composed of clamorous accusation, stinging innuendo, pathetic visualization, invocation of law and precedent, and a peroration of thundering invective. The peculiar defenselessness of a husband against a homicidal wife was dwelt on at length, ten of the jurors being married. He sketched in heavy strokes the type of wife who obtains valuable property gifts from her husband, influences him to make a will by which she will further profit, eggs him on to maniacal fury by—he stopped significantly—the one provocation upon which he had been heard to threaten her life. This husband-murderer chooses one such inevitable—*inevitable*—outburst of perhaps justifiable anger to madden her husband into inflicting effective, but superficial, injuries—the jury had, throughout, been studying those injuries rather than the prosecutor's speech—so that she might safely kill him—*after his rage had subsided*—as she admits; then coolly probates his will before a legal accusation can be lodged against her, and pleads self-defense for murdering this all-too-generous, forgiving husband—while he slept.

Yet, the so-called superficial injuries—which, quite obviously, could not have been self-inflicted—were gruesome exhibits.

The defendant, whose pink and white had not wavered during the cruel hour and a half consumed in the district attorney's speech, quietly waived argument.

"Your honor," she said, rising respectfully, with absolute poise, "I do

not wish to confuse by oratory the one issue before this jury: Whether a woman has the same right to shoot in self-defense as a man."

During the measured charge of the judge, the standing jurymen seemed taking notes. When the bailiff approached to conduct them to the jury room the foreman addressed the judge.

"Your honor, the jury has arrived at a verdict and is ready to report."

A blind man might have thought the room empty of all but the judge until the final verdict was pronounced.

"Not guilty."

Then a curious thing occurred; straight mob reaction, in which apparently no individual took the lead. The audience shrank quietly from the room without so much as a whispered murmur of comment. Leering men who had joked salaciously about strawberries; sentimental women who had kept Ruth Bardick's cell choked to sickness with costly bouquets—to all of them this fair-complexioned woman appealed no longer as the injured wife who had gamely and subtly defended her sex's right to self-protection. She was now—a woman who had deliberately shot her sleeping husband in the back. Killed him while he slept.

An undercurrent of realization that she had come out of it a fairly rich woman, freed from a husband she no longer desired, may also have influenced their mood. But apparently the moving reaction was the desire to get away from a murderess.

The reporters—sob sisters included—had departed first in one mad rush. The jurymen had filed modestly out, their interest in the purplish spots apparently abated. Even Mrs. Bardick's consulting attorney forgot the customary handshake. He followed the judge into his private chamber, where he could now be seen busy over legal papers.

The bailiff made an awkward step toward Mrs. Bardick who sat, in the otherwise vacated courtroom, pink and white, serene, composedly watching her lawyer through the open door. Her hands curved loosely, her pose was comfortable, her poise incomparable. Her upraised lashes showed to advantage the shining black of her normally contracted pupils.

But the bailiff hastily retraced his step and went out. Seward Gaines had entered; was crossing rapidly to Mrs. Bardick's chair.

"Ruth!" Overmastering emotion paled Gaines' browned features to a sickly yellow. "*Ruth!* You know I'd never have let you stand the penalty if——" Her eyes continued to observe her lawyer, beyond. The rose tints did not waver. Gaines went on desperately, yet with caution. "*I had to go back to you that night! God! That wild ride up and down the mountainside! The fear of finding you dead! He would have killed you! And his gun was ready to my hand.*"

Her gentle breathing remained undisturbed.

"When I saw you crawling toward me—with *that* on your throat——" His words choked; he put a trembling hand to his own throat, while his eyes continued cautiously to sweep the empty room. "*I reached in and—— Ruth! Why don't you notice me? You told me this was the only way out—that you could get by on self-defense, but I—— never! Why, you planned this defense yourself!*" She remained placidly unaware of him. "*Think what I lived through between nine and eleven—you alone up there with——it!*" Yes, think what she must have undergone! "*Making good my alibi, calling toasts that he was to have called—joking, leading the laughs—— Ruth! Speak to me! You can't be thinking I'll desert you! Go away immediately. Put your property in agents' hands. I'll give out I've*

had a better offer in the city, and follow. In a few days we can be married, and——"

His breath hung suspended. Her open gaze left the judge's chamber, traveled slowly to meet his. Her hands lay loosely curved. But no pink showed on the white countenance she turned to him. Bloodless it was now, Carved out of white wax it looked. Her splendid lips were gray; straight and stiff, showing white points between. Her shining black pupils spread and spread until no edge of gray iris was visible—just two round black pools

which touched the full lower lids and reached up to meet the heavy white lids above, two deep pools of unutterable loathing and fear.

From between the gray lips came two deliberate syllables:

"You—hound!"

People outside pitied Gaines as he broke through them to the street. He'd learned his lesson, they said. Young men can't be too careful. But Mrs. Bardick had this time overshot her mark. No man could be expected to marry a woman like her!



### A KEEPSAKE SONG

THE bee he has white honey,  
The Sunday child her muff,  
The rich man much money  
Though never quite enough,  
The apple has a springtime smell,  
The star fields silver grain,  
But I have youth, the cockleshell,  
And the sweet laugh of Jane.

The dogs run cock and feather  
For joy of shifting speed,  
The sailor likes fine weather,  
The fool likes his breed.  
They grow too proud with talking loud,  
Too slug with staying vain.  
I blow and yaw like windlestraw  
And hear the laugh of Jane.

The lark's tune goes so clearly,  
But Jane's is clear wells.  
The cuckoo's voice currs cheerly,  
But Jane's is new bells.  
Whether she chuckles like a dove  
Or laughs like April rain,  
It is her heart and hands I love,  
The moth-wing soul of Jane.

STEPHEN VINCENT BENET.





# More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Sarah Wilson:

Queen of Humbugs.

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,  
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,  
Except with this for an overword—  
But where are the snows of yesteryear?  
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

**T**HERE was a great commotion at the King's Arms, in the quaint old town of Williamsburg, Virginia, one summer day in the year 1771.

Heads bobbed at windows, curious eyes peeped from behind snowy curtains. Serving maids and men craned their necks around the corner of the kitchen door. Mine host himself hurried down the path to the road as fast as his fat legs and his shortness of breath would let him. And his equally fat and equally breathless wife followed, patting her hair with anxious fingers as she ran. The pair bobbed obsequious welcome toward a heavy and important-looking chaise, with liveried postilions.

Who the prospective guest might be none of the crowd knew, but that she was a very great personage indeed, no one doubted in the least. Trunks and bandboxes covered every available inch of space inside and outside the vehicle.

As the landlord, with his wife at his heels, reached the chaise side, a charming face smiled out from the shirred folds of a huge, green-silk calash.

"Have you a pleasant set of rooms suitable for a lady of quality?" inquired

a haughty, but very sweet voice. "I am traveling alone, and would rest here for a day and a night."

With more low bowings the landlord assured the wearer of the green calash that his were the finest rooms to be had in the country. To the nearest servant he shouted in a tremendous voice:

"Get the keys of number three, quick! *Run!*" And the gasping boy ran, quite as if the devil were after him.

The lady remained in the chaise and watched the flunkies unload her luggage. Her head was cocked a little to one side as she smilingly ordered the men to be careful; then, still watching them critically, she chatted pleasantly to the landlord and his wife.

When the last gayly decorated bandbox had been carried into the inn, the lady thrust out a slim, dainty foot and followed her luggage. Her rich, silken, lace-trimmed gown rustled softly as with aristocratic grace and languor she swung her hoop skirts up the walk.

The awe-struck crowd now stared at close range. But the winsome guest paid not the slightest attention to them as she followed the landlady into the hallway and upstairs to "number three."

The landlady bustled about, giving the pillows deft pats here and there, parting the window curtains to let in the mild air, wiping an imaginary bit

of dust from the glass case which covered the wax flowers on the mantel. At last, when there was no further possible excuse to stay, she went out.

Her guest closed the door and locked it, with a sigh of relief. Then with profound satisfaction she gazed at the reflection of herself and her luggage in the huge mirror.

Throwing off the green-silk calash, she carefully smoothed and rearranged her high-piled hair. Then she tripped over to one of the trunks and, unlocking it, pulled out a gauze cap with huge, batlike wings. She was busily adjusting this on her head when there came a soft tap at the door.

"Oh, la!" she said impatiently.

Then aloud: "Who can that be? The goose of a landlady, no doubt."

She made no move toward the door, but still stood in front of the mirror, carefully adjusting the airy and bird-like cap. Then came another knock. This time a bit more insistent.

The guest swept toward the door, prepared to annihilate the well-meaning landlady. In one impatient gesture she unlocked it and flung it wide—then stared in blank astonishment at what she saw.

Instead of the landlady, a peddler stood there, gazing at her with strange, keen eyes. She started to close the door again, but the peddler quickly put his toe in the crack.

"Sure, your ladyship may be wanting some laces?" he asked humbly.

"No, nothing, good man," she answered firmly, trying to push the door shut.

"As beautiful ribbons as ever suited your delicate complexion," the peddler went on patiently.

"I want nothing," snapped the lady.

"And long may your ladyship be in that happy condition!" leered the man impudently. "But these pins, for holding your iligant hair over that fashionable roll——"

"You are impertinent, fellow!" cried the lady hotly, pulling with all her might at the door. She had almost succeeded in slamming it in the man's face when, suddenly, his manner changed. Leaning close to her, he whispered without any brogue at all:

"Mistress Sarah Wilson, *I know you!*"

The lady stopped breathing for a moment. She stared intently at the peddler's face, with great black eyes which were sharp with fright. Then she glanced quickly up and down the hall to see that no one was looking and, without a word, pulled the man into her room and locked the door.

With her hand still on the bolt, she faced him and said firmly:

"Now, out with it! What do you mean?"

"You have nothing to fear from me," said the peddler suavely. "That is, you have nothing to fear if you do as I wish you to; if you *don't*, that is another matter. But I am very sure you will. Honor among thieves we'll call it if you like."

"But how——"

"How do I happen to know that your ladyship is not your ladyship, but plain Mistress Sarah Wilson? Doubtless you are longing to know, so I'll tell you. I was sentenced to transportation—you see I am not quite as wicked as you, after all—at the same assizes that you were sentenced to be hanged!"

Before I tell you what happened next, I must take you back some years, and to England; back to the time when our super-woman was just beginning to have dreams of greatness. These dreams began when she was very tiny, and grew as she grew.

Her parents were gentlefolk, and little Sarah received the education of a gentlewoman. But money was lacking. Though the little girl's family were very strong on "ancient lineage," they were poor as church mice. From

the time Sarah was old enough to understand anything at all, she heard constant talk of money, and still more constant talk of its lack. The one hope of the Wilson family was Sarah's eldest brother. In order that he might have his fling in society and at last annex a rich wife the other children were obliged to scrimp and do without in every possible way.

Sarah looked on with large, solemn, black, understanding eyes, as her family kowtowed to rank and fortune. She listened to the tales her brother told of flattery, of intrigue, of diplomacy. She watched him leap on in the world, while the rest of the family applauded and stayed behind. Sarah did not like staying behind.

Her morals and her religion received no sort of stimulus. The truth became less than nothing to her, but she grew very "accomplished," and she learned to make the most of the strange charm that was hers by nature. As she looked on life's stage, while still merely a part of the audience, she discovered that money was the "open sesame" for everything in the world. And she sighed for money to conquer that world. More than that, she resolved to get it, whether by foul means or fair.

When she grew old enough to cling to the fringes of society by the strength of her own small fingers, she went to live with the rich Miss Vernon as companion. This was in the time of George III. Miss Vernon was an intimate and valued friend of the queen.

Sarah was in clover. Miss Vernon took her to court balls, musicales, and all sorts of gay functions. The young girl made herself indispensable to her benefactress and so cemented her position. Sarah was naturally handsome, in a piquant, fascinating way.

Says William Dunlap: "She had an animated countenance, brilliant black eyes, a saucy, tip-tilted nose, fine teeth, brown hair combed over a high roll or

8—Ains.

cushion, surmounting a prominent forehead."

Miss Vernon added to Sarah's quaint charm by lavishing beautiful clothes on her, and Sarah certainly knew how to make the most of them. She played her game so well that she had half her world in love with her before she was fairly launched in society.

She could have married any one of a dozen men far above her in station before she was twenty. But Sarah would have none of them. She was not content with her own station, nor with the heights immediately above her. She flirted with her lovers and flaunted her pretty clothes in the faces of her less lucky rivals. But she refused all offers of marriage.

Drunk with success, she meant to fly to the sky. And she might have done it, had she not made one little misstep. And this is how it happened:

Miss Vernon was anxious to get a confidential message to her friend and patroness, the queen. There was no one whom she dared send on this particular errand except her own devoted companion, Sarah Wilson. So, with many secret instructions, Sarah started for the palace.

What the message was, history does not tell us, but it was so important that several court attendants were sent in different directions to find the queen and request an audience.

Meantime, the spoiled little superwoman was left to cool her heels in an anteroom adjoining the queen's apartments. She was not used to waiting in anterooms. It bored her. So she got up and roamed toward a door. Gently pushing it open, she saw that the room was empty. More, it was another anteroom, adjoining the queen's boudoir. Silently as a Persian kitten and with eyes big with curiosity, she tiptoed across the intervening space until she actually stood in the queen's boudoir. An instant later, she had slipped across

the floor and was in front of the queen's dressing table. On it was a casket of jewels and a diamond-set miniature of Her Royal Majesty. Suddenly a wonderful idea seized Sarah. Almost believing the whole thing to be a dream, she snapped up the casket of jewels and the miniature and tiptoed through the silent rooms to the chair where she had sat before—ages before, so it now seemed.

With quick, sure fingers she thrust the queen's miniature under the high cushion which crowned her hair. She tried to do the same with the casket, but she heard laughing voices, and there were footsteps coming her way, so she thrust the awkward thing recklessly down her low neck through an armhole and into the puff of her sleeve, trusting to her lucky star that it would stay there.

It bulged, perfectly evident, even through her enveloping lace scarf, if one had chanced to notice it. But Sarah's lucky star had risen, and the attendants who came to summon her—the queen had at last been located in the gardens—noticed only her sparkling eyes and lovely color. If they thought anything at all about the flame in her cheeks, doubtless they put it down to the fact that she was about to have audience with the queen.

From that time, Sarah began to suffer the pangs of the guilty. Once safely back in the secret recesses of her own room, with curtains tightly drawn and door locked, she took out her plunder and examined it. With trembling fingers she decked her small self with one flashing jewel after another until her mirror sent back such a dazzling reflection that it turned her faint and giddy.

Underneath the glittering mass her heart beat suffocatingly. Common sense told her this was no way to do. So she packed all the jewels into the casket again, even the diamond miniature.

Fearing that her room might be searched, she opened the cushioned roll on her head, took most of the stuffing out, and put the jewels, casket and all, into the roll and sewed it up. This done, she unlocked her door and, outwardly calm, entered the world once more.

The queer part of it is that no one ever suspected her of the theft. She was too thoroughly charming to be associated with anything so sordid. She looked on serenely, callously, while others were arrested and punished for the crime.

At length she decided that it was safe to begin to realize on her riches. Disguising herself very convincingly—not as a servant, as most people would have done, but as a gentlewoman of a different type from her own—she sold one of the jewels to a dealer. In this disguise she was wise, for had she dressed as a servant, and appeared with a jewel of such great value, she would have been suspected at once.

Again her lucky star shone over her. But it deserted the girl some time later when the jeweler decided to sell the gem. The odd-shaped emerald was recognized as one of the queen's missing jewels.

The jeweler hastened to describe the charming woman from whom he had bought it. He could not remember one article of her carefully arranged dress, but no man who ever saw her could forget her glittering, jewellike eyes or her bewitching dimples. Those she had been unable to disguise. There were no others quite like them in court circles, and the theft was soon traced to her door.

Sarah flatly denied her guilt, and not a trace of the jewels could be found among her belongings. Her family screened her as best they could with their torn remnants of respectability. Miss Vernon declared the imputation to be an outrage. Sarah's host of

lovers rallied round her and interceded for her with desperate alibis and heart-broken petitions for clemency. None of them would believe her guilty. She was the picture of cruelly injured innocence.

In spite of all this, the hard-hearted magistrates, sternly refusing to look at her, ordered her imprisoned. She was tried, found guilty, and condemned to be hanged.

At this, her adorers, who hitherto had all hated each other more or less as rivals, forgot their hatred and combined in petitioning to save her life. The petition carried a surprising number of great names. But, finally, it was Sarah's own charm which induced the Crown to stay the execution. Her sentence was changed to transportation to "His Majesty's American plantations, there to be sold for life." And, it was at the dock, where she bade tearful farewell to all her friends, that Thomas Bell, also sentenced to transportation, first laid eyes on her.

Theft, in England, as late as the nineteenth century, was punishable, in extreme cases, by death. In this connection, an odd fact, perhaps less well-known, is that the English law punished wives for husband-murder by burning them at the stake. The last woman to suffer this horrible penalty was burned to death as recently as 1790.

Sarah's commuted sentence was an excess of leniency, due to the number and importance of the aforesaid great men's names on her petition.

She and Thomas Bell were put on different ships and Sarah did not even know that such a person as her fellow convict existed. But, before long, her charm had so laid hold of Bell that he managed to find out her name.

Bell was a brilliant, well-educated rogue, whose chosen life of adventure had led him up and downhill. Like Sarah, his fondness for other people's money had landed him on the trans-

portation ship. A glimpse of her bright eyes lightened the clouds around him for a moment, but it was two years before he saw her again.

Immediately upon her landing in America, Sarah was sent to the slave market. Her beauty at once attracted attention, and the bidding for her was high. Finally, a man named William Duval paid a top price for her and took her to his home in Bush Creek, Maryland.

The super-woman did not long remain a "slave." Duval became so crazily devoted to her that she soon ruled the whole plantation. She set herself to charm him, and she succeeded beyond her hopes. Her winsome, well-bred appearance no less than her actual beauty, her accomplishments, and her real usefulness so hypnotized Duval that he first made her his chum, then put the entire care of his children and his property into her very frail hands.

She had been allowed, by special dispensation, to bring with her into "slavery" all the lovely clothes in which she had flaunted herself at court. She had forgotten nothing, least of all the queen's jewels! They, with the miniature, still reposed in the enormous roll which added so many inches to her height, and gave her the very latest court coiffure. She never changed the style of this coiffure for the best of reasons—she could not, without exposing the hiding place of her fortune.

Then came a day, two years afterward, when Duval was obliged to tear himself from his beloved Sarah long enough to attend to some business in a distant colony. As soon as his back was turned, Sarah skipped gayly about the house, stole everything of value she could lay her hands on, packed her trunks, and decamped.

When she was far enough away, she acquired a negro servant, clothed herself as became a lady of much quality—not forgetting the roll in her hair—



and set forth once more on her conquest of the world.

By chaise, she journeyed to the King's Arms at Williamsburg, and, all unknowingly, toward her fellow convict, Thomas Bell.

This brings us to the point where she stood, with her back to the locked door, panting defiance at Bell.

After a moment's quick thought, her clever brain told her that it was useless to try to deny her identity or to defy this man. She was entirely helpless in his hands. So she let go of the door and suggested that they sit down and talk things over.

This suited Bell perfectly.

He, also, it seemed, had made off with a goodly sum belonging to the man who had bought him, and he was masquerading as a peddler in order to avert any suspicion which might lead to his arrest. He suggested that they pool their fortunes.

Sarah had no choice but to agree, so together they hatched a most wonderful plot for the undoing of their fellow men.

Sarah was to let the secret leak out that she was "Princess Susannah Carolina Matilda, sister of the Queen of Great Britain." Thomas was to impersonate her betrothed lover, Mr. Edward Augustus Montague, "a private gentleman of fortune," for the love of whom she had been persuaded to fly to America incognito, for, of course, her royal relatives forbade the match.

Thus, wearing the mantle of royalty wrong side out, they proposed to tour America to their mutual advantage.

For Sarah this was comparatively simple, for she had all the necessary clothes, and the queen's miniature, as well as the other jewels, wherewith to prove her claim.

But it took time and thought to deck out Bell.

At that period, the clothes of a man of fashion were many and costly.

There were various changes of wigs, and the wigs required constant dressing. There were suits of velvet, cloth, and silk, hand-embroidered, lace-trimmed in gold or silver. Silk stockings were also indispensable, and gold knee buckles, and buckles of paste. There must be at least one gold-lace hat, two gold watches—both to be worn at the same time—and a sword with a richly ornamented hilt.

Also, there must be numerous negro servants.

The pretty pair went about the matter systematically, and in due time the Princess Susannah Carolina Matilda appeared at one of the most fashionable inns in Virginia. Sarah had seen enough of royalty to imitate it to perfection. She made a tremendous sensation. Soon the Honorable Mr. Edward Augustus Montague appeared. In his way, he was as elegant as the princess. Curiosity was on tiptoe. People scraped acquaintance with the great lady. One, only one, charming dame was finally invited to Sarah's sitting room. Here, the secret of Susannah's exalted rank was lured from her reluctant lips and, in a burst of confidence, Susannah showed her new bosom friend her "sister's" miniature.

An hour later, the whole story was all over town.

The princess, it seemed, had been "very disobedient" in running off with her fiancé, but all was coming right. She "had had assurances from St. James'" that their flight was forgiven. A ship of war was to be sent for her and, on her return to her royal relatives, her marriage would take place at Westminster Abbey, as soon as the honorable Edward had been created an earl, as was His Majesty's gracious intention.

Presently hints were dropped that funds were running low. Great remittances were on the way, but had not yet arrived. After sowing this seed,

Sarah, affecting the airs of royalty, allowed her hand to be kissed by a favored few. They instantly pressed upon her all their available cash and unlimited credit. Presents were showered upon the princess, who promised in return all sorts of high government offices, promotions in the army, and what not.

Presently, she dropped a very faint hint that possibly, after all, the honorable Edward might be less attractive than some of her American courtiers. This hint turned the whole male portion of the crowd from mere satellites into dead-in-earnest suitors; for above all Sarah's stolen jewels glittered her strange black eyes, and these she used to even better advantage than she did the jewels. She did not alone *seem* royal, she actually *was* royal, as long as she was permitted to play the part. She almost persuaded herself that she was own sister to the personage in the diamond-studded frame. Which is true art—of a sort.

Sarah now began to have trouble with Bell. He, like the others, had fallen deeply in love with Sarah. He had dreams of marrying her one day when their fast-accumulating fortunes should settle down on a firm foundation. Sarah, it seemed, had no such idea. She rashly let a bit of this feeling show itself in her hint that she was beginning to weary a trifle of the honorable Edward.

This enraged Bell, but he seemed powerless to help matters. He found it increasingly difficult to obtain audience alone with Sarah. Finally, one day, he sent her a peremptory message, demanding instant admittance. This startled even the "sister of the queen." She let him come up.

Bursting into the room, he thrust a newspaper into her hand.

"Read that," he said hoarsely. "The game's up!"

And this is what Sarah read:

Bush Creek, Frederick County, Maryland; October, the eleventh, 1771. Run away from the subscriber, a convict servant maid named Sarah Wilson. Has changed her name to Lady Susannah Carolina Matilda, which makes the publick believe that she is Her Majesty's sister. She has dark hair, stoops slightly in the shoulders, makes a common practice of writing and marking her clothes with a crown and a C. Whoever secures the said servant woman or takes her home to her master, shall receive five pistoles, besides costs and charges. I entitle Michael Dalton to search the city of Philadelphia, and from thence to Charleston, for the said woman.

WILLIAM DUVAL.

—All other matters were put aside in the necessity for instant flight. To square themselves with their new friends, the pretty pair pretended they were going to visit a distant plantation, but would soon be back.

With this brief explanation, they took themselves off as fast as possible.

They thought it best to separate for a while. Then once more they joined forces and played the same game in South Carolina, except that, this time, Sarah was the Princess Augusta-de Waldegrave.

Michael Dalton, however, proved himself a good sleuth. He kept right on their trail, drawing the net ever closer and closer around them.

After one last attempt to get Sarah to marry him, Bell lost his nerve and quitted the "princess" forever. But first he stuffed a goodly lot of the queen's jewels into his hungry pocket.

Left alone, Sarah found the game impossible. The nets were too tightly drawn; there was no way of escape. Dalton trapped her at last. And her spurious life, which had been punctuated with periodic gay successes, now came to an inglorious end.



# Pirate Craft

By Jessie Henderson

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**I**T is the ambition of every ship-master to retire to a farm, far beyond the sound of tossing seas. Nor was Cap'n Ben Hutton an exception to the rule. Voyages to most corners of the earth; encounters with waterspouts, green hands, and port collectors; long hours on deck when the monsoon freshened; short rations when the doldrums nailed his schooner, breezeless, on a tropic ocean—all these had added a crispness to the grass, a coolness to the trees of the Cap'n's Pennsylvania inheritance.

An obliging relative, dying, left the fifty rich acres and the two stone cottages to Cap'n Ben between a broken rudder off Hatteras and a dispute with a native Porto Rican pilot. It was the psychological moment. Cap'n Ben resigned his command, packed his sextant, journeyed to his farmstead, and dropped anchor gratefully on the shady porch.

To his New England eyes the house, of that pale-green "snakestone," beloved by Greater Philadelphia, was curiously charming. A gentle undulation of field, black-plowed ground, and swelling hmock softened by springtime haze, rolled toward the eastern horizon which flushed at night, with a delicate pink, the reflected lights of Philadelphia. Next door stood another snakestone cottage just beyond a broken board fence. Cap'n Ben watched the faint, blue smoke rings from his neighbor's chimney with a proprietary interest. The second cottage was his, also; rented by

the agent a week before the Cap'n's arrival to one Sid Gregg. He and Sid would likely be great cronies, soon's he had time to run over and get acquainted. Cozy chats, winter evenings; pipes before the fire.

Cap'n's eyes wandered contentedly across the straggling rosebushes bordering his front path, and down through the deep shadows beneath the big old trees that met above the country road. There was a whiff of early honeysuckle in the air and the Cap'n sniffed it eagerly. Flowers, by gravy! Millions of posies, all he wanted of 'em, all he'd been denied the raising through those endless forty years on the barren sea. Posies—and peace. No other house within a quarter mile. No prying neighbors. Oh, excellent relative to live so secluded and die so timely! Let the hurricane rage. Let the sea crash. Here was snug harbor.

From now till kingdom come there were but two things to give him pause. The lesser of these was cutworms. Many a time had the Cap'n and the Second Mate marveled at the ingenuity of the diabolical varmints that smuggled themselves even aboard ship, gnawin' the daylights out of the Second's wee tomato patch on the for'ard deck. Cutworms! The fiercest scourge of heaven. Except, of course—

But, shucks! No danger o' that, in this place.

Rising lazily, the Cap'n rolled down his path, under the trees, and up another path to the house next door. Ap-

provingly he noted the trim beds of geranium and heliotrope that lined the flagstone walk and, smitten by the noon-day sun, sent out a wholesome fragrance. Must have taken a lot of weeding to get neglected posies into such good shape in a little over a week's tenancy. He put his legs apart to study the job with more care, bracing himself unconsciously against the half expected roll of a comber. The Cap'n still had his sea legs with him.

Perhaps it was as well he had, for at that moment the front door swung open to reveal his other, and greater, dread. Braced though he was for a comber, Cap'n Ben did not expect a tidal wave. He tacked a trifle, a sudden sag in his short white beard indicating the drop of his jaw. A woman!

"Nice day!" called the creature with the friendliest nod in the world. A young woman!

Tricked out in a primrose-yellow gown with tiny brick-red dots, a—very short gown indeed. Slim ankles incased in white stockings, so's nobody'd miss 'em. Red hair blazing in the sunshine; *her* sort would call it auburn.

"Nice day!" insisted the person again, affable as you please.

Cap'n Ben averted his gaze. Let other seafaring men get a name for gallantry. Let 'em. They hadn't been jilted thirty year ago by Dora Sprague whilst they was voyagin' t' Hankow and t' Pernambuco and t' hellenback collectin' enough to marry on.

"Where's y' pa?" the Cap'n inquired coldly.

"Minnesota," came the brisk reply.

"Y' brother, then, or whoever Sid is." A dull blush of annoyance spread over his leathern face. "It's Mr. Sid Gregg I come to see."

"Walk right in"—this with unabashed heartiness—"I'm Sid. Sidney Gregg. You are my landlord, aren't you? I've meant to run over and talk with you about a number of things. If I had a

husband, or somebody"—Great grief! A spinster, farewell, paradise!—"I shouldn't need to bother you, but as it is, there's a leak in the roof. The rain comes right down through the north wall, and then about the rats. I suppose a few rats go with every barn, but really the place is swarming. Simply swarming. Couldn't you arrange to get a—"

Gradually Cap'n Ben backed down the walk. A woman was bad enough; a lone woman worse; a chattering woman not to be endured. The while his conscious mind kept him saying, "Yes, marm; yes, marm," at proper intervals, his subconscious mind delivered a tirade of which Redhead remained blissfully unaware. Wicked, wuthless, weak, 'n' wabbly—that's them. Might be some 't you could trust, but most of 'em a wuss gamble than a Brazil lottery. Life too short to spend puzzlin' out their tackin' an' haulin' an' dunnin' on to shoals. Not wuth the salvagin', most times. Women! Aghr-rr!

How he finally escaped that sugarsweet, insistent voice, he didn't rightly know. But never loomed the home dock more welcome to a tempest-harried craft than loomed the silent hallway of the Cap'n's snakestone house when once he had gained the entrance and locked the door. A redhead; a common scold; with a lease for two years. And Dick halfway on the return trip from Rio to Philadelphia right now.

For it was not so much on his own account that the Cap'n steered straight out to sea when he sighted a woman off his bows. If need be, he knew how to buffet the pirate craft so that they cracked on all sail and streaked it for the horizon's rim. But Nephew Dick, the apple of the old man's eye, as likely a lad as ever twirled the wheel, Nephew Dick, raised aboard the Cap'n's very deck, bullied and licked into shape till at the age of twenty-six he was the keenest skipper of the C. & T. fleet and

the handsomest—by the shadow of his own broken love-dream and maybe by the light of an appraising glint he had once or twice discovered in his nephew's sea-blue glance, Cap'n Ben felt a clutch at his heart whenever he thought of Dick and women.

Later, perhaps. Later when Dick had won more salt-sea laurels. Later when he'd outgrown the cub stage and had a little common sense pounded into that curly head. But not now. Not for years. But on the threshold of his career, when the wrong woman could undo him utterly.

Dora's hair had been red. She called it auburn.

That afternoon the Cap'n mended the gap in his fence. It was a high fence across which strands of grapevine twined and, crowned by the bushy foliage, it shut out not only a view of his neighbor's front porch but of her pretty flower beds as well. Never mind. Mended it should be. As the last nail went spitefully into place, Cap'n Ben straightened his short, spare frame, gathered his bearded chin into three fingers of his right hand, and stood a moment looking unpleasantly before him. It was a gesture which insubordinate seamen had sometimes ignored once, but not—after their return to consciousness—a second time.

Twilight glowed, jewellike, in the calm air. Birds called. The honeysuckle ached with sweetness. But all of them lured the Cap'n in vain. He stumped into the house; slammed the door. His day was ruined. By gravity, his next two years were ruined.

For almost a week the Cap'n did not leave his cottage except by stealth and usually at night. It rained a good deal, but what is rain to a man who has taken salt sprays over his head for forty years? Not the weather but his tenant kept the skipper warily indoors.

She stalked him. Yes, sir; stalked him. Came a-knocking, all hours of the

day. Sat on his porch while he watched through the parlor blinds. Left notes in the crack of the kitchen window. All about the roof. And the rats. Once she pretty nigh caught him as he darted out to the barn to feed Billy, the hoss, a dear and delightful relic of the late relative. Billy, the hoss, was about the only comfort Cap'n had nowadays, with Redhead prowling here and there till he was ready to jump at a sail's flapping. Awful stubborn, them red-headed women. Get their teeth on a idea like a turtle on a coon's leg, and never let go. Rainin' into the house, was it? Too many rats, hey? Oh, yes; certainly, he'd fix the place right up so's she'd be sure to stay her full two years. In a cat's foot, he would.

There were moments when he wished himself at sea again.

Not even Dora, however, had taught him precisely how stubborn a red-haired woman can be. Dull, rather rhythmic sounds first gave him warning. With a timid caution that would have been balm to the souls of many a crew, the skipper forsook his point of vantage by the kitchen door whither he had crept to enjoy the first burst of sun in six days. Screened by the vines on his front porch he both saw and heard.

What he saw was the village roofer astride the eaves, tat-tat-tatting at a brand new and doubtless expensive bit of roofing where the leak had been. What he heard was the village estimate of himself, his nephew, and his nephew's matrimonial prospects, delivered by the roofer under the by-no-means inept prodding of the invisible Sidney. The girl seemed highly diverted. She chaffed the roofer so cleverly that he was unaware of it.

"But why does he have to get his uncle's permission?" the sugar-sweet voice inquired. "Is there a buried treasure?"

"Oh, I reckon the old boy's pretty well fixed," came the drawl, punctu-



ated by hammer blows, "I never see one o' them pirates yet that starved hisself to death. But that ain't it. The old feller and this young feller is awful thick, seems like; seems like the young feller's pop was the old feller's brother and the idea was if anything happened to pop, the old boy would bring up the kid. There was a shipwreck, seems like, and all hands was lost except the kid which stayed ashore. Least, that's what Min Evans used to say."

"So I've heard," said the girl.

Cousin Min, the obliging and deceased relative. Cap'n Ben recalled the latter fact in time to check a deep-sea opinion of her babbling tongue. So it was all over the village! Women! And here was this critter settin' her cap for Dick a'ready, afore the boy had even made the Capes, let alone got up the Delaware River.

"What happened then?" prompted the siren voice.

"Seems like the old boy raises this kid, but the old boy ain't got no use for the ladies, not ever being popular with them hisself. And seems like he made this kid promise not to get married unless'n the old boy give him leave."

"No real man would make a promise like that, or keep it," said the scornful voice.

"We-ell, I reckon the young feller knows enough to consult the old gent first, so's to side-step a terrible fight."

"I like fights," remarked the voice a bit complacently.

The roofer was gathering up his tools.

"Yeah? Well, I reckon you can pick one any day you want with old dynamite over yonder."

To this the voice made no answer.

"But for the old feller and the young feller to fight with each other, it'd break 'em both up, seems though. Least, that's how Min Evans talked. The old boy's kinder crazy, too."

"Crazy!"

"Most o' them old sea captains is."

He prepared to descend his ladder. "Statues in the back yard, an' all." He looked off toward the fence where the figurehead of the Captain's own good bark *Stella Maris* had been transplanted and loomed ghostly above the grapevines. "I d'know who this *Stella* was, but I'll tell the world she weren't no home-breaker, not from her looks, seems though."

Magenta with rage, for he'd rather have his own grandmother maligned than *Stella Maris* who had guided him through many a stormy sea, Cap'n Ben forsook his observation post. He was not beyond earshot, however, before Sidney said to the roofer:

"Send the bill to Captain Hutton, please."

Many weeks were to pass before a settlement of the roofer's bill. First, for example, the captain was to notice several drivers checking their horses or their motors in front of his neighbor's place and staring at his house and at hers; sometimes laughing. It annoyed him hugely.

He found the explanation in a newspaper which he was scanning for news of Dick's vessel. A neat little advertisement announced that Sidney Gregg raised rats for laboratory tests, and colleges were invited to write for terms. So that was it! Thought she'd put something over on him, eh? Still—a woman, and not afraid of rats. H'm. Cap'n didn't like rats any too well himself; perhaps because he knew them better than she did. Knew 'em well enough, anyway, to know he wasn't going to have 'em raised next door. No, sir. He'd show her. He'd clean them up, by gravy.

Cap'n got some ferrets. Sid got a dog. Cap'n got a cat. As a result of the rapid-fire acquirements, things happened. The ferrets, so far as the time allowed them permitted, cleaned up the

rats. The dog cleaned up the ferrets. The cat cleaned up the dog. And sometimes the dog cleaned up the cat. Between cat and dog, between Cap'n and Sid, ensued an armed truce.

Meanwhile, from the depths of his sea chest where they had been stored for years, Cap'n Ben hauled forth a strange collection of seeds and bulbs. In every land he had collected them, whenever a semitropical plant struck his fancy. Avidly the little man toiled, early and late, in his flower garden. How he had envied the Second his leisure and his tomato patch! Here, however, were glorious amends. Waiting for his seeds and bulbs to sprout, he nursed the older garden back to health and order. Such roses had never bloomed in Araby as opened their soft petals along his front path. California's self had never seen such great and golden poppies.

Sid's grapevine shaded his dahlia bed too deeply. Ruthless, he cut it off to the exact line. Nothing of hers should wander on his premises, by gravy. The vine began to "bleed" to death. He pretended not to notice. Redhead made no sign.

Driving into his yard one day behind Billy, whose ordinary speed was around two knots, the Cap'n somehow lost control of the steering gear. Billy, snorting, brought up hard against the fence, knocked out a board, shook himself free, and stood with an air of meek astonishment looking at the skipper in the wagon. Cap'n led the hoss to the barn and returned to find the grapevine abundantly avenged.

An end of shaft had run through the broken fence, sticking out perhaps seven inches above Sidney's lettuce bed. As the Cap'n hove round the corner, Redhead turned rapidly toward her house with a saw in one hand and seven inches of severed shaft in the other.

You never could tell when something might strike the Cap'n funny. This did.

It is possible that Sidney heard his chuckle. He could have sworn her shoulders shook.

Anyway, he tied the bleeding vine up that very day; did a good, surgical job on it, too. Sid apparently was not at home; the kitchen shades were down, as a sidelong glance assured him. But the little tartar must have watched all the time, because next morning when he went out in the dawnlight to feed the hoss and to marvel at the dewdrops on his rose petals—

What the Sam Hill ailed *Stella Maris*?

Blankly the white figurehead from his old ship stared before her, seeing phantom oceans, breasting vanished storms, blandly smiling her wooden smile. And well might she smile, for in the crook of one arm she clasped a dish of home-made doughnuts, while on the extended wrist of the other she held a scoured lard pail full of Boston baked beans. The captain's favorite victuals; the only New England victuals, by gravy, he'd seen since he struck Pennsylvania where they called a doughnut a cruller and a soggy hunk of pastry a doughnut. Sid's doughnuts hadn't soaked fat, neither, and the beans was baked with an onion, same's real Christians did 'em. Well!

A bit sheepish, certain that eyes watched from behind the next-door curtains, Cap'n Ben stripped *Stella* of her salvage and bore the loot indoors. That was a feast day!

It pleased him to keep up the semblance of a feud. No speech was exchanged over the fence. But the two neighbors had reached the smiling-and-looking-away stage when the tragedy happened.

Fiercely as the Cap'n loved his flowers, Sidney appeared to love her dog. A nondescript creature was Angel, a poor thing, but her own. No doubt he proved a great comfort to a lone woman in an echoing house.

Honest-eyed, frolicsome, adoring, Angel was all of these so long as Ginger, the Cap'n's yellow cat, played in her own back yard. But Ginger liked to roam. On a day when the armed truce was rapidly melting into an entente cordiale, Ginger chased a tempting butterfly over the fence and into Angel's vision.

Much more quickly than she had come, Ginger returned to her own domain. She waited not to scale the fence, but flashed down the sidewalk and up the Cap'n's path. Angel flashed at her tail's tip, and when the skipper looked up from his newspaper on the porch Ginger was high in the chestnut tree while Angel, in full cry, pranced and clawed madly about its root. Unfortunately he pranced and clawed on the exact spot where the Cap'n's Port Rican passion flowers were sending up their precious shoots.

The skipper reached for one of the big pink shells that lay each side of his door and threw it with that deadly aim which often results when a man isn't really trying to hit anything. The heavy missile knocked Angel end over end. He lay for one appalling moment as if stunned. The next, yelping as only a hurt and frightened dog can yelp, he fled on three legs for the comfort of Sidney's arms.

For his part, the Cap'n stood amazed and a little frightened at what he had done. Knowing Redhead, he expected reprisals.

It filled him, therefore, with uneasiness but not surprise when, an hour later, Sidney came from her kitchen door with a small rug in her hands. She must have been bathing Angel's wounds, for her dress had stains on it such as blood and liniment might make. From behind his vines the Cap'n watched.

White to the lips, her eyes so dark with wrath that they were two blazing holes, she marched up to the fence,

lifted the rug high, and shook it. A cloud of dust flew into the Cap'n's yard, making him long to sneeze.

That was all. Merely a shake of the rug and she turned on her heel. The skipper puzzled over it even after he'd gone to bed.

But there was no puzzle about it next morning, when he went out early to feed the hoss and marvel at the dew on his roses. Scorched, shriveled, two thirds of his posies were dead. Not dead for a season, as he realized from a glance at the ruin, but dead for always—grass, bushes, blossoms. That she-devil had loaded her rug with borax.

He lifted a stricken gaze to the house beyond the fence. Its windows stared back, imperturbable in the morning light. No one except Dick would have believed it, but tears smarted at his eyelids. The hours he had worked to make his garden incomparable stalked before him; the years he had secretly yearned for posies, millions of 'em, while he ranged the barren sea. The cruelty of youth smote his soul; youth, which does not remember, nor care, how long it takes to make a garden, how few years remain for the making when a man is growing old. There came a droop to his thin shoulders.

But only for a moment. Bewilderment gave place to indignation.

"My God, what a temper!" he said, recalling Redhead's ashen lips, and he said it in grudging respect. After all, she loved her dog as much as he had loved his roses. Another look at the blackened buds filled him with a rage equal to any that Redhead could summon.

Enough. She should go. Lease or no lease.

Up her path he stumbled. Banged on the door. Got no response. In the barn, perhaps? He crossed the yard, flung open the barn door, and stood there in the unaccustomed dimness.

A heavy wire fence of close weave

stretched across the inside of the barn from floor to ceiling, an innovation, the reason for which he did not pause to guess, but a thing which, as an innovation, he disapproved. There was a door in the fence. Cap'n Ben pushed it. Carelessly closed, it opened at his touch and, as he stepped inside, fastened behind him with a snap of spring lock. A ladder stood against one of the broad rafters, but he scarcely had time to notice this before a rumbling noise attracted his attention.

Out from their holes rushed rats, big and small; by the hundreds, it seemed to Cap'n Ben. Tumbling over one another, squealing, jumping in rapture at the prospect of a meal—food evidently being associated with the click of the spring lock—they headed in a tossing, tangled mass straight for the Cap'n's legs. As has been said, the Cap'n knew rats, wharf rats, chiefly, and he disliked them for cause. Without a moment's hesitation or a second thought, he swarmed up the ladder and lay aloft on the wide beam.

Perched there, glowering down at the rodents that scrambled about the ladder's foot, this was how Sid found him a few minutes later. The young sneak must have been in her kitchen all the time.

Her look was as startled as the skipper's when first she spied him away up on the rafter. Then as she took in the situation the pale anger of her face melted into rose and she laughed deliciously. Really, she had a pretty laugh. At its sound a dark flush crept across the Cap'n's face. He knew a ludicrous situation as well as the next one, but if there were any shreds of dignity remaining to a man on a rafter he intended to preserve them. The grim set of his beard gave no indication that he saw anything humorous about the affair. Unsmiling, sharp as gimlets, his eyes bored into those of the girl who had killed his flowers.

In her hand she held a bit of paper, but after another glance at the Cap'n she tucked it into her belt, filled a measure with grain from a bin at the wall, and began to feed her pets. From his rafter the skipper watched in disgust. She stood outside the fence and tossed the food in, none too anxious, it seemed, to trust her own ankles with that ravenous horde. For a while there were no sounds except the light swish of grain, the squeal and scramble of rats. Cap'n supposed she must get good money for 'em, to take all this trouble with the varmints. Easier than farmin' for a woman. Mebbe she had some other income. Must have, Rats wouldn't pay enough. If 'twas any one else, he'd think her cute to turn a pest into a money-maker. Covertly he watched the calm profile, the long, slim hands. That red hair of hers made a bright spot in the dim barn. But, Lordy! A woman that could even look at a rat was a new species to him. New and not nice.

Angel sniffed at the outer door. Entered, limping. Still she uttered no word. Minutes dragged out. Send him to Coventry, would she? Huh, guess if a woman could be dumb, he could. Pr'aps she'd vowed never to speak to him again. Good thing. Posy-murderer.

When Sid had emptied the grain measure she brushed her fingers with a delicate gesture and turned to go. Her hand was on the door before Cap'n made up his mind to speak. After all, he couldn't be left up there all day. She must be made to call the varmints off, somehow. Docile with her, but they'd spring at a stranger.

"Wait!" he commanded huskily.

Redhead turned that charming smile on him.

"Oh, of course," she said, sugar-sweet; "you wanted to see me about this." She took the paper from her belt, slipped back the spring lock, stepped

warily inside the wire inclosure—the rats, accustomed to her, remained intent on their food—and advanced a few rounds up the ladder. Cap'n accepted the paper. It was the roofer's bill.

Well! Blackmail, eh—or something. Thought she had him trapped. H'm! If she could walk past rats, so could he, tame ones like these. And in any event Captain Benjamin Frazer Hutton had never taken orders from a gal. He handed the paper back, his gimlet gaze on her quizzical face.

"Trouble with you, young woman," said he, "is that you've fell into a box o' knives an' got the sharps. But not sharp enough."

"No?" she said, sugar-sweet.

Down she hopped. As Cap'n reached for the top rung, she slid the ladder beyond his reach and laid it on the floor. Out the fence gate she tripped; it clicked behind her half-heartedly, without a definite catch of the lock—Cap'n noticed that. At the barn door she turned to look back. Cap'n Ben had gathered his bearded chin into three fingers of his right hand.

"Think it over. I'll be back at supper time," she promised.

Oh, for a belying pin on a schooner far from port. For a heaving deck and handcuffs and the ship's "brig" down deep beneath the bows. A red-haired smart Aleck of a woman. But no fool. He'd admit as much. With the admission a reluctant twinkle softened the old eyes. Smart gal, by gravy; but not smart enough. This wasn't to be borne.

Having made the decision, Cap'n Ben acted upon it at once.

Black hours followed. Hours of anguish, of unconsciousness varied by a dreamy floating through space and a return once more to the thin grass beside the path. Inch by inch; inch by inch. Agony unendurable, invisible hands at his throat, consciousness sliding. Rain? Tasted funny. Tears?

Yep. Some woman cryin' on his face. G'way—g'way—

He woke to cool darkness, gently emphasized by a shaded lamp in a far corner. Through the window came a fugitive breeze heavy with the scent of flowers. Night. It must be night. And this white stuff? In bed, of course. Things were vague. He gave a troubled sigh.

Instantly some one laid light fingers on his forehead. Her hair flamed against the lamplight.

"Better, poor dear?" she whispered. Poor dear!

Perhaps because her hair reminded him of Dora Sprague, he closed his eyes and turned his head away. He could feel the girl's fingers tremble at the rebuff. Briefly, however, she told the things which she divined he wanted to know. A broken leg as a result of his jump. His discovery by Angel after he had crawled almost to his own porch. Her frantic race, behind Billy, the hoss, for Dr. Craven. And it was all her fault; all her fault! His flowers, she was going to make his garden like new, with her own hands. A penance. Ashamed—she was s-so ashamed—sniff, sniff. A trained nurse would come to-morrow.

When the redheads did give in, the Cap'n reflected, they went too far, same's when they got mad. Takin' every mite o' the blame, an' all. Well, let her. Do her good. Wait and see how she turned out. Too tired t' talk just now.

An enormous rat, right there in his bedroom, leaped on the coverlet. It wrung from him a choked cry of terror. This red-headed girl was at his side in one jump; gathered him in her arms; brushed the varmint away. Brushed thousands of 'em away during that night of stark delirium, twined her young arms around him and didn't let go one moment, lest the horror return.

When morning came, and reason, Sid



looked the more ill of the two. Her eyes, he told himself, were like burned holes in a blanket. Remorse and weariness had drained her cheeks of color. Her arms shook from the long muscular strain, try though she would to conceal the fact. Ready to drop, he thought, watching her narrowly in the hours before the nurse arrived.

Except in delirium he had not spoken to Sid since his adventure in the barn. Now, as the starved nurse took charge and Sid turned away, he clawed feebly at her dress.

"Tell the roofer t'send his damn bill t' me," he said.

It was scandalous, the ease with which the Cap'n's tough constitution recovered from the ordeal. Yet rapidly though he recuperated, Sid had his garden cleared of dead bushes and ready for replanting by the time he could sit up at the window and roar at her that she was doin' it altogether wrong.

He was still fussing about the need of staying in when he wanted to be out superintending the planting—it was a glorious afternoon—when Sid came out of her kitchen to hang a pail of New England fish balls on *Stella's* wrist. The nurse would take them in, and it saved steps to utilize *Stella* as a dumb-waiter. Redhead's folks, it appeared, had come from New England and certainly they hadn't forgotten civilized cooking even out in Minnesota.

This afternoon Sid wore a thin dress of the light green of coral reefs just below the surface. It made her hair glow more than ever and turned her eyes green as a cat's and as fascinating. Cap'n looked out from behind his window curtain and studied her closely.

In the act of presenting *Stella* with the fish balls, the Cap'n saw Sid draw back so suddenly that she dropped the pail. Dick caught it.

"Oh!" cried Redhead on a flurried intake of breath, "you—you're——"

Bronzed young sea-god, he gave her a long, steady, ocean-blue look. And then together they staged a little scene, for the benefit of the Cap'n, who was insufficiently hidden by the window curtain.

"I'm Captain Hutton's nephew," he remarked, "and you're the young lady next door who's been so kind?"

"Kind!" Her tone was bitter.

"My uncle told me."

"Will he ever get over hating me?" she asked wistfully.

"I don't know," Dick answered.

Presently he tore his glance from hers and turned away with the pail.

"Oh—ah—captain!" Redhead called. "Won't you come over to see me, s-some time?"

The Cap'n heard Dick reply politely. "I don't believe——"

Redhead appeared a trifle dashed.

"I suppose perhaps you oughtn't," she murmured. "I—I just wanted to talk things over."

The shade at the Cap'n's window fluttered delicately. Had Dick heard it? His tone grew even more polite.

"I'm sorry——" Again he started for the house.

"'Fraidcat!" called Redhead softly. By gravy, the little devil! Her face lighted with mischief. "You're scared of——" Realizing that the Cap'n's window was open, she clapped a hand over her mouth.

Dick wheeled and in three strides was at the fence. But by this time the girl was scudding for her house.

At twilight the Cap'n saw her appear again on her back steps, with a white bowl of something for the invalid. He watched her a moment, then turned to the young sea-god at his bedside. Casually, oh, so casually, the skipper mentioned that red-haired piece next door. He questioned. He hinted. He pried without mercy.

Dick, driven to the wall, jerked up his chin.

"If you mean, am I planning to marry any one, I've been wanting to tell you, sir. I'm—I'm already married."

The whole truth came in a rush. "Three months ago. Yes, sir. Yes, uncle. In Porto Rico."

"*Porto Rico!*" shouted Cap'n Ben in his best after-deck manner. "One o' them natives? Without lettin' me say aye, yes, or no?"

"Yes, sir. No, sir." Dick looked very flustered and handsome and determined. "Another fellow was on her trail, and so—I did want you to meet her, and maybe learn to like her, before I told you, but— So did she, only you— Not a native, sir. A school-teacher."

"My God! An old maid school-marm!" The Cap'n flung himself back-

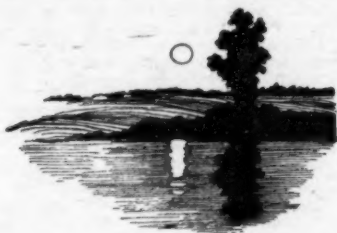
ward on the pillows, just as Redhead appeared in the doorway. She must have heard some of the quarrel, for she gave the sea-god a reproachful look and her face was pale as the bowl in her hands.

The men fell silent at her entrance. She went gently to the bed, smoothed the pillows, set her bowl on the table, patted the old man's hand. When she spoke to the Cap'n the words would scarcely come, so near were her tears.

"I'm sorry. You're right about me not being smart as I thought. I—I'm not any use."

"Cat's foot!" shouted the skipper furiously. "You're the only comfort I got. Why couldn't that plaguy fool have married you?"

"But, uncle," said Dick, "I did."



## INDIAN SUMMER

**W**HAT ghost is this that haunts the ruined world,  
When autumn lights great fires upon the hills?

What essence is it that the wind distills

At the full hour when purple grapes are curled

Upon the vines? Red banners are unfurled,

And a deep silence the gray valley fills.

Something is moving over rocks and rills,

While crimson leaves down lonely lanes are whirled.

It is the phantom of summer that I see,

The spirit of a maid pale as the moon,

With a sad light within her ghostly eyes.

Her face is like the shadow on a tree,

A dim remembrance of the vanished June,

A hint, a dream of earth's lost paradise.

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

# Venturer's Luck

By Katharine Hill

Author of "The Pearl and the Técla,"  
"The Little Clay Pot," etc.



## THE STORY SO FAR

In the little college town of Darthurst, Val Morgan had a rather thin time of it. Her father, a professor of Greek history, had died, leaving her in the care of her stepmother. To make a living for her own children and Val, Mrs. Morgan conducted one of the typical boarding houses for students. To the boarding house came Greg Sherril, one day, back from the Servian army service, and genuinely interested in college courses of study. More interesting than his classes he found Valerie Morgan, in whom he saw more than the daughter of the landlady serving apple sauce and butter to the boarders at dinner. Val, he discovered, had a capacity for appreciating Greek art and history, once their beauty was pointed out to her, which was positively astonishing. Also she had a desire to travel and see the world. This desire was so keen that when Greg Sherril, tired of his theoretical college lectures, decided to resume his wanderings, Val, with fifteen-year-old optimism, followed him on the train, believing that he meant seriously his jesting remark that he "would take her along."

But after Greg sent her home from the next station, firmly, but a bit puzzled, Val changed. She changed so decidedly that within five years she eloped with Frederick Percival Henderson, the nineteen-year-old son of a New York millionaire. She eloped with him because she had determined to be free of the narrow confines of Darthurst and to see the world. It seemed like a pleasant adventure until Freddie kissed her rather frenziedly in the hotel as she was dressing for dinner.

When a little bit later, Freddie's father burst into her room and offered to pay her a neat little annuity to keep her hands off Freddie's immature head, she accepted almost gratefully. It was only inevitable that she should embark now for New York. Under her new financial rating she made a triumphant round of shops and shows and beauty parlors, emerging with her eyebrows reshaped and her soul a little weary. It was while she was in this same Manhattan mood, hanging precariously on the very verge of sophistication, that she encountered Greg Sherril, recognized him, but was by him unrecognized in her glory of new plumage. Rather swiftly, through a casual flirtation on Val's part, they achieved a new intimacy, Val—for romantic reasons of her own—posing as a mysterious "Miss Smith." In this same spirit she took him to a rather elaborate ball on the Avenue, to which she had no sort of invitation. Greg Sherril was, of course, utterly unaware that she had brazenly "walked in" on the affair. However, his suspicions were beginning to wake somewhat even before a maid called Val aside. Following the maid upstairs, Val, to her consternation, found that she had blundered into the house of her one-time father-in-law, Arnold Henderson.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

VAL was conducted upstairs, led along a passage, and halted before a closed door. The sanctuary of the mistress of the house? A room in which it was planned to detain her until the police could be called? Strung tense, every sense alert, conscious of danger, but ready to fight, she waited the few seconds that passed

between her guide's knock and the word from within to enter.

It came in a man's voice, and it was a business man's den that she saw when the door was opened—a small, square room with a big, square desk for its central piece of furniture, leather chairs, bookcases, a file case. A man who was sitting at the desk turned toward them, but he did not rise as she came in.

"Oh!" said Val, on a sharp breath of surprise.

The man was Arnold Henderson, in evening dress, very much at home, very much the master of the house, and—it was also evident—very angry.

"You are Valerie Morgan?" he demanded, staring at her closely.

"Yes——"

"And you have the colossal effrontery to come into my house!"

"I didn't know it was your house, or I—wouldn't have."

"Didn't know it was my house!" He flung down the cigar he had begun absently to cut. "Can't you think up a better lie than that one? Whose house did you think it was?"

His manner was more brutal than his words, and Val hated him. Unfortunately her own act had placed her in a position where she could only defend herself by quibbling. She mingled a little truth with it.

"I was just brought here—brought on here"—yes, that was the phrase—"from somewhere else. I had no idea it was your house, Mr. Henderson!" She stressed the truth so hard that he disbelieved it, while accepting her misleading first statement readily enough. "If I'd known this was your house, I would not have dreamed of entering it, ever, under any conditions."

"Yes, you're beginning to see now the seriousness of what you've done, to realize that your coming here amounts to that molestation of my son that it's a condition of our agreement there was to be none of! He doesn't know you're here, I'm glad to say, and he isn't going to know it. You're going to be escorted off these premises while his mother sees that he stays in another part of the house."

Val took a step toward him, so angry suddenly that there was no longer room in her for any feeling of fear or of embarrassment. She was trembling,

g—Ains.

her beautiful eyes were a little wild, her voice was low, but imperfectly under control.

"You simply sent for me in order to insult me. If you wanted me out of the house, why didn't you have that maid tell me to go? How dare you speak to me like that!"

"I sent for you because I wanted to have it clearly understood that another breach of faith of this kind will mean that you never will see another cent of my money. You're paid to keep away, young woman!"

"Paid to keep away!"

"What do you think you're paid for? You should realize your position a little better. You knew to-night this was my house! You came here in the hope of getting hold of Fred again. Perhaps you counted on not being recognized; you've changed your appearance a good deal since I saw you last. If you hadn't told your name to some one who repeated it to my wife, I might have hesitated some time. No doubt you have calculated that he will be of age in a few months, able to marry you legally, and that you could make a better thing out of him than you're getting now from me."

"Mr. Henderson, I want to speak, please. I——"

He paid no attention to her interruption.

"Well, it won't work, Miss Valerie Morgan! Fred has no money whatever of his own, and will have mine to throw away only as long as his behavior satisfies me. You simply stand to lose five thousand a year by tracking him, and although it may seem a very trifling sum to you, it's the utmost that can be wrung out of the Henderson family! If you want more, you'll have to try your vampire methods elsewhere. Now let me hear what you intend to do!"

"You can consider our contract at an end. I wouldn't take your money now if I were starving to death!"

This was by no means what Arnold Henderson wished.

"You'll feel rather differently about that by the time the next payment is due, I imagine!" he said. "It's no use getting on your high horse about it; you've already had five thousand from me, you know."

"I shall repay that!" Val flung at him.

She had no idea how she should go about raising such a sum, or whatever portion of it she had spent, but she spoke with entire conviction and singleness of purpose. If Arnold Henderson had struck her, she could hardly have been more amazed, more outraged, than by his words and manner, and the implications they carried.

She had been shaken, after her first frightened bewilderment, in a rush of anger so disintegrating that it was succeeded by a feeling of faintness, but with it and after it there came an appalled sense that she had deserved, had invited all this by her unthinking acceptance of the man's money. She had literally never envisaged, until this moment, the position toward Arnold Henderson in which this acceptance placed her. She had wanted money, she had been at a disadvantage, hampered, helpless, without it, and it had been offered to her, at the time, without overt insult, as a businesslike quid pro quo. Since then she had been too busy spending, living, to brood over the source of her easy supplies.

Carelessness, childishness, or some fatal ignobility in her own soul, only now recognized, she was nevertheless degraded by her own act, placed in a situation of intolerable humiliation from which she could rescue herself only by flinging Mr. Henderson's money in his face.

She flung it, in words, and he laughed, a jeering, unpleasant laugh, harder to bear than anything which had gone before.

"I'm going now," said Val, wheel-

ing. "I've nothing more to say. I refuse to listen to any more from you!"

She'd have to face Greg Sherril downstairs, brazen it out to him somehow. The thought of him was like heat near a burn. What would he think of her if he knew?

She faltered, tried desperately to pull herself together, moved rather slowly to the door, and caught at the little delay occasioned by a step in the hall and a discreet rapping on the panels.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Henderson irritably.

The door opened and Fred walked in, rather excited, full of a grievance and a curiosity of his own.

"Say, father, what's the answer?" he burst out. "Mother acts as if there were smallpox in the front part of the house. She sent me word——"

He became aware of Val, stopped. His eyes, amazed at first, grew worshipping as he stared at her. He came unconsciously nearer.

"Val!"

Arnold Henderson made a snarling sound of disgust.

"It's great to see you again, Val! You know, I remembered you all right! I couldn't forget you in a million years, but I didn't remember you any such dream of dreams as this!"

She gasped, tried for her old, light, teasing manner with him.

"Clothes, Fred, just clothes!"

"Have you been in town long? Are you——"

"Will you kindly go, Miss Morgan!"

Mr. Henderson commanded loudly.

Val brushed past Fred, opened the door quickly, and shut it behind her. Down that hall on the other side of the landing, the first open door to the left—she recollected it all mistily, as from long ago—was the women's dressing room. She powdered her flushed face quickly, but carefully, caught up her coat, ran downstairs.

Greg, loitering in a doorway that



commanded the stairs, saw and joined her.

"You stayed long enough. What have you got your wrap for? Don't you want something to eat? I do! I could eat everything."

Arnold Henderson's food, under Arnold Henderson's roof!

"No, I'm going home. You'll have to come, too. You can get yourself something to eat somewhere, I suppose, if you're hungry!"

"You're angry with me, of course. I don't wonder." He spoke humbly. "I made an ass of myself. You'll have to make allowances for me, Miss Smith. I don't know anything about this kind of thing, and I— Still, that's no excuse!"

He had been quite reassured by her disappearance, her long stay in the intimate upper regions of the house. He had worried, during her absence, only lest she should resent his suspicions just as, he supposed, she was now resenting them.

There was no relenting on her face, and he went hurriedly for his own outdoor things. After all, one could plead for forgiveness better in a taxi.

"I want to walk, a little way, anyhow," Val said suddenly as they left the house.

The night was beautiful enough to explain the wish, a mild night of early April, with a little half moon just clear of the black trees in the park. The rain had stopped, and the pavements were almost dry. Val walked quickly, breathing the free air outside Arnold Henderson's house—which she would never again enter—in long breaths.

Before Greg had thought of a disarming sentence to address to her, there were quick footsteps behind them, and to his surprise and displeasure a rather undersized young man, hatless, but with a topcoat over evening clothes, had caught up with them and was pressing close to Val on the inner side.

"Look here, you *will* tell me your address? Father's crazy, I think. I've simply got to see you!"

"I haven't got to see you! Much better leave things as they are, Fred!"

"Of course you despise me. To think I had you, *had* you, and let myself be bulldozed out of you!"

"Mr. Sherril," said Val hastily, "this is an old friend whom I want to talk to for just a minute, if you wouldn't mind walking a little behind, just this next block."

Greg fell back; there was no choice. But he was not pleased by the request, still less did he like the trend of the young man's remarks as they had reached him. He felt angry again with Miss Smith, whom he had just been wishing to propitiate. Why need she have such secrets, reserves, mysteries? He had told her everything about himself, and he knew of her nothing whatever beyond her address and telephone number. What claim had this impertinent youngster on Miss Smith's time?

## CHAPTER XIX.

"I made the fatal mistake of my life when I let you go!" Fred declared wildly. "I've regretted it every minute of every day since. You couldn't have given me up if I'd held firm."

"Oh, come, Freddy! You were just as anxious to get rid of me. Of course you were. Don't you remember what a nasty whack I gave you with the hairbrush. I've always been so sorry about that. I did apologize, didn't I?"

"Apologize! How d'you mean, apologize?"

"Why, in the note I wrote you."

"Note? I never had any note! Do you mean to say you sent me a *note*, and they didn't give it to me? That's just a little bit too much! My father seems to take me for a baby!"

"It wasn't anything a bit important.

I just said I was awfully sorry, particularly about the hairbrush."

"Well, he had no right not to give it to me."

"I'll say it again now—I'm sorry."

"So am I," he said moodily. "I often think it would have been a lot easier to get over this if you hadn't struck me that way. It's one of those things a fellow can't forget. I feel that on my mouth, and I feel every kiss I ever got from you on my mouth—there weren't too many of them—and between 'em they drive me nearly crazy. Say, Val, will you marry me again when I'm twenty-one?"

"No, of course not."

"I didn't suppose you would. Well, will you give me your address?"

"Not now; perhaps later on."

When she had repaid his father she would be free to see as much of Fred as she desired. It would never be a great deal for his own sake, though, as a means of vexing Arnold Henderson, it might well be almost as much as Fred himself could ask.

"Why not now? I shouldn't bother you too much. And I'll be back at Darthurst next week. I want to write to you."

"I can't. But I promise you definitely I will. It will be as soon as a certain thing is done that is going to be done as quickly as I can do it. You must go back now. Good night!"

He went reluctantly, and she stood still on the curb until Greg, who was strolling slowly far behind, had caught up with her. They walked on in silence for some minutes. Then he said abruptly:

"Of course I have no right to understand your affairs——"

That he should understand them was the last thing she wished, but an explanation of some kind he must have, and she began to think rapidly. She disliked lying to Greg, and even the disguise about her name she hoped to give

up soon; she had been sorry more than once that she had begun it. Obviously, she couldn't tell him the truth. Yet something she had to tell him by way of explanation.

"Let's go and sit in the park; shall we?" she said.

There was a break in the wall nearly opposite them. From it slanted a walk edged with benches, empty except for one distant couple. Val sat down, at some peril to her delicately colored wrap, and Greg dropped beside her.

His nearness would have been comforting but for the misunderstanding between them. If she could have told him everything, leaned frankly against him as that other girl was abandoning herself to her lover's embracing arm, begged him to take her away! The memory of that long-ago rebuff made any such appeal impossible, even if there were not the matter of the five thousand dollars to be returned to Arnold Henderson before she was free to think of her own desires.

Five thousand dollars! The magnitude of the sum she was pledged to find frightened her, but she felt within her the sort of fanatic determination which can accomplish anything.

It became necessary now to say something to Greg, and she said it with a high, desperate little shake of laughter.

"It was funny your thinking I didn't know those people; the Hendersons. You'll never know *how* funny it was!"

"I may not know how funny it was, but I do know it was pretty insulting. I—I don't know quite what to say to try to put myself straight with you. Of course I apologize, I'm endlessly sorry, and all that. But the thing's not pardonable. I just have to throw myself on your generosity. After all the kindness you've shown me, to accuse you of that, of invading a private house without an invitation——"

"Oh, if it comes to that, I didn't have an invitation!"

She spoke recklessly, tormented by her inner trouble, forgetting that events had fallen so happily in their surface aspects that his continued deception on this score would have been easy. Besides, the matter of the "walking in" had dwindled, for her, to insignificance in comparison with what had followed.

"You mean, of course, you know them so well you didn't need one?"

"No; not exactly. They were very surprised to see me. Didn't you ever push yourself in at celebrations, Mohammedan ceremonies in queer places abroad, when you knew perfectly well that you weren't wanted, that you'd be killed, perhaps, if you were caught?"

Greg sat back with a return of his former anger at this confession.

"Then we *were* there without a license. Whatever you may like to do yourself, you had no right to put me in a position like that!"

"No nice girl would have done it, of course. Perhaps I ought to have told you before that I'm not a nice girl. I thought you could see it for yourself. A nice girl wouldn't have picked you up the way I did."

She knew she was destroying all sorts of delicate, irreplaceable things, reaching out toward her in Greg's soul, illusions, impalpable bridges between them. He could only misunderstand her now. She found a miserable satisfaction in this.

Greg got up and walked away a few steps, walked back and forth in front of her, finally stopped beside her. Some of his indignation was dissipated by this, which was his way of working off uncomfortable intensities of feeling. After all, they were safely out of the house they had invaded, after all, he had encountered no indignities in the breach of decency she had betrayed him into.

And Val, faintly shimmering in the starlight from her uncovered head, down her fantastic dress under the

loosened coat, to the gold buckles of her slippers, had a sorceress' allurements in naughtiness that could not leave him indifferent.

"I wish I knew what you meant when you said you weren't a nice girl. Girls who aren't nice sometimes stand for—being kissed. Are you too nice for that?"

He sat down beside her again, a little closer than before, and put his hand over hers. She had wanted him to show just such an interest, had looked forward to it, and had looked forward to what he would say when she acted as she would know how to do. She had wondered what he would do at the revelation of her real name, and she had considered all sorts of romantic subsequences.

What restrained her from carrying out her original program was a genuine humility. She wasn't a nice girl, she thought; not nearly nice enough for Greg, even if her form of not being nice hadn't to do with letting men kiss her. She had earned an unenviable reputation in Darthurst; she had shown herself lacking in the commonest self-respect when she put herself in the position she now occupied toward the Hendersons. If her parents had lived—

She discerned a number of excuses for herself, but, after all, excuses do not alter facts. With relation to every other man she had ever known, Val enjoyed the feeling of comfortable superiority that American customs engender in a girl. But Greg was different. It was all the worse that he should be wanting to kiss her in this way, without having said a word of love, with even a phrase of contempt still on his lips.

She tipped her face back to look past him to the high, faint stars, more temptingly than she stopped to think, and she said in a fervent undertone:

"I hate you!"

In the same moment she was being kissed.

She hadn't expected this, hadn't bargained for it, found in it a breathless delight, an aching disquiet, solace, and a dragging down to earth that was intolerable, the ultimate humiliation of the night. She broke away, covered her mouth with a fold of her cloak.

"I had no business to do that, of course," said Greg, when he had a little recovered himself. For there had been, for him, an intoxication in that kiss unlike anything he had known before. Did a man who married, who gave up adventure, freedom, all the other possibilities, get overpaid by such a keen tumult of sensation whenever he liked to embrace his wife? Of course not; he had heard and read all his life that the thing staled, that its wonder ebbed a little with every repetition.

Yet in its quality that first kiss resembled some unforgettable moments of his life, added itself to them. It was like seeing a dawn that had not been hoped for, smelling land fragrances after shipwreck, like, most like, coming on water after long desert thirst. She wasn't a nice girl, by her own admission. He experimented with all the possible inferences from that expression, and found none that seemed to alter the fact, suddenly envisaged, but surely always true from the beginning, that she was necessary to him.

He drew a long wavering breath. But before he could speak the girl was speaking, in little rushes of hot words.

"I'm sorry for any one who puts any trust in you—ever. I've done it twice."

Afterward he wondered why she said "twice."

"And each time you've failed me about as utterly as it was possible to do. I thought you were different. I don't know why I should have imagined any man ever could be different. You're going away soon, aren't you? Then we need never see each other again, as long as we live."

She stood up, started sharply toward

the exit of the park. Greg was beside her at once, catching the round firmness of her arm through the folds of the loose cloak about it.

"I don't know what you want to act like this for. By your own showing you did a questionable thing to-night. And that boy who followed us out of the house—you can't tell me there isn't something between you! Here, hold on! If you think you can lose me so easily, you're wrong!"

She wanted respect, consideration, solicitude, after her humiliation at Arnold Henderson's house. As he spoke, gripping her arm so tightly that it showed discoloration next day, Val found herself hating him wildly.

"What business is it of yours what I do, what there is between me and any one? *You've* nothing to do with me, *you'll* never see me or speak to me after to-night! If you don't let go of me, I shall scream for help!"

A party of half a dozen people passed down the Avenue on the park side, just beyond the low stone wall. Greg's hand dropped from her arm, but he moved into the center of the path before her.

"Do you expect me to believe that nobody ever kissed you before?"

"I expect nothing of you; no understanding or generosity or help. I expect you to go away, and never to speak to me again."

He moved aside, thoughtfully, walked at a little distance behind her to a near-by taxi stand, and stood with his hat off in a somewhat ironical salute as, without gesture or further acknowledgment of his existence, she stepped into a cab and the motor started.

## CHAPTER XX.

When her taxi had lost itself some blocks away Greg turned back into the park and sat down again on the bench. The couple near by had gone

now, too, and he had the place to himself.

It was a disquieting evening to look back upon.

Miss Smith had been a figure of mystery before, but of a mystery seductive only and challenging, without suggestion of sinister, hidden things in the shadows.

On the mere face value their uninvited invasion of a private house for an hour's dancing would not have struck Sherril so jarringly; he might have drawn a parallel, as she had tried to do, between such an adventure and his own attendance, in disguise, at more than one savage dance or sacred ceremonial. But the vulgarity of the newspaper discussion of the thing, the absurd, ignominious name derived from the practice, associated it for him with all that appalling welter of the cheap and sensational, maudlin and dirty, which is typified by the worst newspapers and the worst plays, an element ever present in city life, and one of the main reasons why Greg hated cities.

"Walk-ins!"

That he had deserved the epithet, unknowingly and so briefly, was galling enough, but it was much harder to face the knowledge that Miss Smith had earned it before and would probably earn it again, with her eyes wide open, in the company of some less scrupulous man.

What sort of men must she habitually go around with? Every one must wish to make her acquaintance, and he knew that it was easy to make her acquaintance. That slight, little fellow who had run after her from the Henderson house had seemed harmless enough in himself. But he was only one.

He reminded himself of his old conclusion—that women had no place in his life. His life, however, was not a planned enterprise. The war, of course, had cut into it, had interrupted certain

undertakings and postponed others. Greg had moments when he asked himself what he was living for, other moments when he thought with uneasiness of the far future, old age, or more present contingencies of sickness.

These aside, he was satisfied enough with his vagabond existence. The rewards of civilized men with fixed places of abode did not beckon him; instinct had set him wandering ten years before, and the real satisfaction he had found had been always along the trail.

Observing the delight of chained men in brief holidays of the sort that made his life, he guessed readily enough that his difference from them was only one of proportion. They had loved another thing a little better than that freedom which they nevertheless loved, while he had made it his first object. While he had admired more than one woman, he had not encountered one for whose sake he was ready to become a slave.

His intercourse with Miss Smith, however, had strangely sharpened his appreciation of the reward of such enslavement. In a life that had been satisfying before he knew her, she had managed to create, by a temporary absence—a withdrawal that should have left all as she found it—a sense of emptiness, a need. No doubt that would, must, pass.

He was not so ignorant as not to realize that he was pitted opposite a force wielded tranquilly and with success by nature against all living things. That was no reason why one should give in to it. The wise course was to remove himself as quickly and as far as possible from the radiating center of that force, from the too-interesting entity that he knew as Miss Smith. When he had held her in his arms he had been all but lost; he would have been quite lost had she responded, had she exerted herself to hold him.

Now that she must be nearly a mile away in a taxi, he could think of her



almost dispassionately. Deficient in pride and delicacy, or she couldn't have taken him to the dance; expensive, extravagant, witness her clothes; of a temper her hair was supposed to indicate, witness her behavior on being kissed; he summed her up and considered the result with disapproval.

Disconcertingly, in that reasonable moment, a vivid memory of her loveliness swept upon him. Clearly a mile was not far enough.

The business that had brought him to New York was not completed, but neither was it certain now that it would ever be completed. There had been exasperating hitches and delays, and yesterday he had been warned, not then utterly to his displeasure, that active developments might be held up for another six weeks.

The only thing to do was to clear out, leave that snarl of business to disentangle itself without him, and to get as far away from New York as was compatible with a quick return when the affair was done. Better even to lose the money involved than part with one's peace of mind!

To the southward, on this seaboard, were islands and islands that he had never visited. Cuba he knew a little and remembered favorably. Why not take any sort of coastwise steamer that offered and make for it again, bargaining there for passage on some schooner trading among the West Indies?

In the morning it was cold and raw again, as spring days can be in New York, with vicious, gusty winds under a high, dun sky, and the thought of palms and rocks warm under the hand, blue skies and creaming sunlit surf was more taking than ever. Sherril made his arrangements with the dispatch he had learned to use in traveling.

On the boat he wrote, and sent back by the pilot, a note of apology and farewell to Miss Smith, care of Morgan, Waverly Place.

## CHAPTER XXI.

MY DEAR MISS SMITH: You told me to go away, and I am going. For the unwarrantable liberty I took last night, and for anything I may have said that displeased you, may I offer again my very sincere apologies?

I am in your debt for many delightful afternoons and evenings, and feel more regret than I quite dare express that our friendship should have ended so disastrously as chiefly through my fault, of course—it has

Faithfully yours, GREGORY SHERRIL.

Val pursed her lips at this excessively formal and correct letter, laid it down, and took up again a much more affecting communication, a notice from her bank that she had overdrawn her account by twenty-eight dollars and fifty-six cents.

It didn't seem possible, and her first reaction to the disagreeable notification was a certainty that a stupid clerk had simply added her checks incorrectly.

This is an accident that conceivably may happen, but it does not happen often, and, after an hour's tussle with the deferred addition and subtraction that had so long haunted her, Val was obliged to admit that it hadn't happened in her particular case.

She had spent all that money in less than six months, for the most part on things that she didn't especially need. Her opinion of herself went lower even than the interview with Arnold Henderson had sent it. The blow of the discovery was the more staggering because, trying to see her affairs optimistically as she lay awake the night before, she had felt sure that there must be at least two thousand dollars remaining to her credit, and that the sum she needed to buy back her self-respect was not, could not, be more than three thousand.

Now, without being able to weaken her determination to get the money to return to Mr. Henderson, the gray light of the chilly morning displayed inexorably the difficulties in the way.

In Darthurst Val had hardly ever had

as large a sum as five dollars all at once; in New York she had had so much money that she had not thought about the amount at all. Except during those few weeks when a librarian's career was planned for her by Mrs. Hitchcock in collusion with her stepmother, she had never considered earning a living, though she had dreamed, of course, of achieving fame in various careers, with corollary riches taken for granted. But she knew several women who worked, and she had been so much richer than any of them that she thought they must be working to very little purpose. She had actually been living, however, at the rate of ten thousand a year.

Val went from one person to another with exploring questions, not advertising her own calamity, but showing a persistent and novel interest in their earnings, their training.

Dorothy Bryce thought that her looks would get her on the stage without much difficulty, but that she couldn't expect to earn more than thirty-five or forty dollars a week for some time.

"And the road's awfully expensive, and lots of the time, of course, you're out of a job. Of course you'd be doing it just for the experience; it would be all right for you, with plenty of money to fall back on."

Mary Weir, amused by the girl's frank pumping, laid her own budget bare for her benefit.

"I get fifty dollars a week as sub-editor of *Blank's*, and then, of course, I do some work of my own on the side. I suppose I make from three to four thousand a year, and at that we're always in debt!"

Mary had a boy at boarding school, and a husband who worked, but with profit only to art.

"Could I do that sort of thing? Is it easy to get a place like yours?"

"Oh, my dear child! Of course, you couldn't; one has to have experience. You're a butterfly!"

Val was not particularly eager to do what paid only fifty dollars a week, reflecting that half that amount, at the very least, would be required to keep alive on, at which rate Mr. Henderson would be repaid only at the end of four years, and she did not press Mary further.

It was disconcerting to find, after a dozen similar inquiries, that Mary actually did better than any other woman of Val's acquaintance. Two girls shared a studio and sold occasional magazine covers and for the solid day's work drew youngsters in natty outfits for a mail-order catalogue. They made spasmodic sums that totaled, for the year, just enough to keep them from paying an income tax. Besides, Val could draw no better than she could write.

Another was a school-teacher, at a teacher's exiguous salary, and there was a librarian who was poorer than anybody, and Dorothy herself, whose salary sounded sufficient until one considered that it had only been paid her for fifteen weeks in a year containing the usual fifty-two.

Val began to feel a little frightened as these discouraging instances multiplied. The matter of her own day-to-day living would become embarrassing before long, more pressing than the need to repay the substantial sum, but she felt that to take some humdrum work at a paltry salary would be to render even more difficult the bold cast for fortune which she had pictured herself so triumphantly making. She borrowed twenty dollars from her stepmother, ten here and five there from people who in the past had borrowed from her, and managed to go on meeting, for a while, expenses which she reduced to a minimum.

Elbowing for space against her financial worries was a moral preoccupation hardly less urgent. Standing aside from her gayeties and extravagances of

the winter, condemning them, she was seeing herself in these days with rather stern young eyes. She hated herself, but she found the satisfaction in doing so that undoubtedly lies there. She was reacting violently against her drifting and pleasure-seeking and contemptible past; she wanted strenuous living now and the arduous conquering of her own respect first, Arnold Henderson's incidentally, and, in due time, Greg Sher-ril's.

She got up early and wore her plainest clothes and answered advertisements fruitlessly. In her own living she was so economical that when Reese Adams reappeared and asked her out to dinner, she accepted with a distinctly eager anticipation of a square meal.

From habit now she reverted to her topic of a girl's earning powers, asked his opinion almost automatically when he had read her his new poem and informed her that she had grown more beautiful since he had last seen her.

"Something's added," he said, staring. "Have you been loving, suffering? If so, whom and for whom?"

"Dear me, haven't you been away?" Val asked idly. "Do you want a better explanation than that?"

"If I could think that! If you'd been thinking about me, perhaps you'd have answered my letters. Beautiful letters they were, too. I do hope you haven't mislaid the second, the one with the poem in it. I haven't got a copy of that thing, and it's rather decent, now, isn't it?"

With the mistiest recollection of some pages of illegible writing she felt guiltily sure she had burned, Val praised the poem as a masterpiece. Then:

"Reese, what d'you know about women working, about a good way for a girl to make real money?"

His answer contrasted bracingly with the drizzling, uniform gloom of all the other responses.

"A girl like you is in line to make all the money she wants, if she wants to."

"Oh, Reese, you darling! Tell me how!"

"Of course it's a degradation!" he began fiercely. "Haven't I told you a hundred times already? Didn't I tell you the first day I met you that any director would give you your own price in pictures?"

The odd thing was that he had, and it had made so little impression on her that even in her time of need she had not remembered it.

"Of course! How could I forget! But——"

"I thought somebody told me you had any amount of money," he said warily.

"I did, I haven't now. Tell me all about it, where I must go, and how much you are exaggerating!"

"It seems meant," he muttered abstractedly, making scratches on the cloth with his fork in some excitement, with keen, quick glances at the lovely, eager face opposite him.

"Look here, Val, I'm going into directing!" he flung aside the fork to say. "I've got hold of a story, a whale of a story, and I've been saving out of the unholy salary they pay me, doing a bit of investing here and there. I've got plenty of money to put on a show. If you'd come in with me and play the girl—why, there'd be nothing to it! The thing would go like a wild elephant! Have to give you a try-out of course, to see if you screen all right, but I have no doubt at all in my own mind. I'd be ready to sign you up right here. Oh, but it's desecration! You, in the movies!"

She was more excited than he, undisturbed by thoughts of desecration, incredulous, hopeful, enthusiastic.

"But Reese, can I act? I've never acted in my life!"

"That doesn't matter a continental! You're intelligent, about nine thousand times more so than the average picture

star; you've got temperament and imagination. You aren't nervous, are you?"

"Nervous?"

"About little things like being shipwrecked, or chased by a tiger. I always play these things safe. I see no sense in taking chances, but sometimes you simply have to get wet, and one of our big scenes calls for a shipwreck and another for a breaking log-jam. If we use animals, of course, there's always a wire screen."

"I shall simply love it! And I shan't feel a bit more nervous than I shall desecrated. It seems too good to be true; it's *just* what I've been wanting. Only Reese——"

"Yes?"

"Do be grossly practical for a minute, and tell me more about the money end!"

"Better do it on a royalty basis; you might clean up any amount that way."

"Would it be soon?"

"As soon as the thing can be done."

"I'd have to have a tiny salary too, because I really am—flat broke."

"Say a hundred a week," he said, naming the smallest sum he could think of as a salary. "We'll photograph you to-morrow and see how you screen, and I'll work out the biggest royalty I can promise you."

His, of course, was to be the part of the girl's lover in the picture, and he was determined that, unless she photographed atrociously, which wasn't probable, the arrangements should go through. Picture actors, though so briefly, are thrown into more intimate relations with each other than the members of a legitimate company even when traveling. The desperate stunts rehearsed together before the actual photographing, the excursions to picturesque, isolated places, bring the players very close together. Then there would be a number of occasions when he would need to hold the girl, who had never let him kiss her, as

tightly as he liked, while the genuine kiss demanded by the "close-up"—no unsatisfying, polite approximation of the stage—was stretched to the censor's limit of so many feet of film.

But it was reassuring to sit in the dark room beside Val no later than the next day, while her pictures were run off, and to see how photography brought out all sorts of harmonies of form, small beauties of detail, which her radiant coloring had eclipsed and prevented even him from appreciating till now. Without the rich copper of her hair, her vivid lips and cheeks, she was not quite Val, but another, very beautiful person, whose movements she herself was gratified to find so unfailingly graceful, whose expressions—she had been told to "register" one emotion and another—were varied and infectious enough to please the director in Reese Adams.

He told her the story of the play afterward, and she exclaimed when she heard that the shipwreck was supposed to take place off a Fiji island.

"Shall we go out there?" she asked breathlessly.

"I should say not! We don't have to. We'll take those scenes in the Bahamas, Nassau, very likely. Everything we want is right there."

It was disappointing to be balked again of the South Seas, but a journey even to the West Indies was something, and Val looked up the islands on the map with a childlike thrill.

She was deeply grateful to Reese in these days, buoyant about money matters, vindictively happy in thinking of the triumphant moment when Arnold Henderson would be repaid. Somewhere, at a deeper level than these immediate considerations, was an ache that she tried to ignore, to deny to herself, and this was not the easier because her preoccupation about money was no longer acute. She couldn't forget Greg Sherril.

The thought of him came to her at all sorts of inconvenient, even absurd moments. She would find her thoughts framing into sentences to be addressed to him, she was visited by short, vivid, memory pictures of his head at this angle and at that, the bulking of a shoulder as he had sat beside her, a hand with a cigarette between the second and third fingers, the rise of the crisp hair from its parting. Above all she remembered his voice, for in the voice the very essence of personality resides. And she remembered over and over again:

"Girls who aren't nice sometimes stand for—being kissed."

She remembered the hot, unsteady tone, the little catch in his breath, and then the sudden fulfillment of the thing she had wished and thought impossible—his arms around her; his face, very, very slightly rough under its shaved smoothness, against hers; their mouths, in that incredible, dizzy little interval of quarreling, pressed close as though he had not just charged her with abominable behavior, as though she had not just said that she hated him, and was not even then drawing breath to repeat it with bitter emphasis.

He was gone and would never come back, and it wasn't thinkable that another man, Reese Adams or any other, could ever satisfy in her the need that Greg had waked.

To him, she imagined, the whole episode had meant little or nothing. He had "picked up" a girl about whose antecedents he supposed himself to know nothing, had spent a little money on her, found her out in a discreditable action, concluded from it that she would resent nothing, and so he had kissed her.

Val had a cruelly logical mind. She spread none of the iridescent, cloudy illusions about her relations with men that most girls veil truths in. She wanted the stark facts always, ugly as

they might be, and she forced herself relentlessly to face them now, to let them rebuke that fortnight's fancy of hers that she could make Greg love her.

But she took the necklace he had once sent her out of her drawer again, and wore it constantly as before.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Val found the Southern voyage, made in a Ward Line steamer touching at Nassau, exciting and delightful past her imagining. Drawing away from the fantastic sky line of New York, steaming out of the lower harbor, past Sandy Hook and its line of breakers on the long bar, heading southward, the girl at the *Wacouta's* rail looked behind, and ahead, and wondered how the city had held her so long.

The influence of Greg was strongly with her, as the ship rolled and swung and the long gray waves tore past for the shore. Adams was admittedly seasick and seldom seen. The members of the company, who remained well, played bridge and deck games without much assistance from their leading woman, who acquired quite soon a reputation which she didn't deserve, for being up-stage.

She paced the decks with her blood humming, the old dreams of her childhood in the ascendancy, the lure of metropolitan pleasures faint enough now. Things that Sherril had said came back to her with fuller understanding.

"It's the globe herself that I love, and she's seven parts water, so I love the water best. That smell of the churned-up sea bottom, not just the salt-surface freshness, but a breath you get on gray days with the wind right, of mysterious underlayers of infinite water!"

She was smelling it now.

"And every bit of rock crop or atoll or ground that rises out of the water, I want to land on and explore. It's the most thrilling continued story in the



world, and how people can limit themselves to one little two-by-four spot and stick to it is what beats me. It's like loving a woman and never kissing her except on the thumb nail of her left hand."

She remembered the intent face of the young Greg, as he studied, many years ago, the maps of the places he meant to visit, and she remembered how she had looked over his shoulder, how she had expected to go, too.

Few though they were, the shipboard days were long, and, after the first, warm enough for relaxed introspection. It was while she lay in a steamer chair with an unread book on her knees and her eyes on the rhythmically swaying horizon, that Val began to read herself, and to see not only that she was in love with Greg Sherril—she had known this even before he had kissed her—but that she had loved him at fifteen, with the childish, idealizing, passionless love which takes half its misery from its lack of standing.

When he had failed her she had forsworn him, built her life without him, and built it badly. If he had not reappeared, filling her with that universal desire to be perfect for his sake, above the reach of insult because disrespect offered to her must reflect upon him, would she have recognized the unworthiness of keeping Arnold Henderson's money, which she had been spending callously for months, without disquiet?

With sunset of the third day they passed Abaco and made the mouth of Nassau harbor. Reeve Adams showed himself, at last, wearing white that set off his richly colored godd looks. The members of the company, drawn together by a common interest, discussed the picture values of the location and commented idly on the yachts which fluttered among the keys within the bar.

"Why, that's the *Spindrif*t, that awfully classy eighty-foot one under sail,"

Reese pointed out, lounging on the rail and indicating the beautiful yacht with a jerked thumb. "That's Arnold Henderson's yacht."

"Arnold Henderson!" repeated Val, with a startled, incredulous little laugh.

"I know her well. The old man let us shoot her last summer, when I was with the Parnick people. You ought to see the way she's fixed inside, silver and glass and inlaid woods and tapestry, the most delightful, luxurious contrivances."

Val didn't listen to his description of the *Spindrif*t's appointments. She had thought of Arnold Henderson as an enemy at a distance, left behind with New York's tall, rather threatening sky line, with whom she need have no more contact until the moment came for wiping out the debt which enabled him to insult her at his pleasure. Of all places, the man was here. How or why, she couldn't conjecture.

"I should think a man like that would have to stay at home and attend to his business!" she said discontentedly.

"Down here to get a drink, most likely," Adams conjectured. "They all come, cruise around, and get what they like. Of course they have the stuff at home, but they've got suddenly thrifty about it."

As a matter of fact, the Hendersons' cruise had been undertaken, ironically enough, in order to remove young Fred from the dangerous neighborhood of Val Morgan. His father had been aghast at the effect on the boy of that night's meeting. There had been a desperate attempt at rebellion, a refusal to go back to Darthurst, finally a nervous crisis when mother and physician had swung to his side, and the return to study had to be definitely abandoned for a time.

Fred spent his empty days in a childishly conceived search for Val, which reduced itself mostly to long prowls through the streets, and searching

glances, sometimes misunderstood, at the face of every red-haired woman he passed. He visited a detective agency, described Val, and was advised to insert personals in newspapers, and—rather facetiously—to inaugurate a prize contest for the most beautiful girl in New York.

"If this girl is half the looker you say she is," joked the man Fred consulted with, "she'd draw the first prize, and you'd stand to lose nothing, anyway, as you say your object's matrimony!"

The poor boy, unquenchably hopeful and cheered with Val's promise of a contingent communication, had almost to be shanghaied aboard the *Spindrift*. He had looked back at New York's diminishing towers with anguished feelings of being carried into exile, never doubting that she remained somewhere behind them. To-night, smoking sullenly on the yacht's after deck and letting his eyes drift over the bulk of the *Wacouta*, a black cliff against the yellow sky, he had no presentiment of his beloved's nearness, though, as always, he was thinking of her.

Presently the *Spindrift* turned and headed for Hog Island, swinging to her anchor with a clean, curling sweep, and the Hendersons left her for the Porcupine Club, where they took their meals.

"One thing has just occurred to me, Reese," Val said, when they had watched the sails flutter down on the yacht, just as night succeeded sunset with tropic abruptness. "About my name. I am going to invent something very romantic to call myself for this picture work. It doesn't make any difference to you, does it?"

"No, none at all, of course, since you're quite unknown at present. What had you thought of?"

"Not Smith."

"Well, naturally not. It's hardly romantic at all, is it? Claribel Montmorency, or something like that?"

"If you don't take time to think, you're likely to find yourself saying Smith, or something equally bad. Your suggestion is, if anything, worse."

"It was hardly serious. My favorite woman's name happens to be Valerie. But there's Audrey and Diana and Margaret, and Helen and Cecily and——"

"Nadine Wilde," Val pronounced suddenly and positively. "That will do nicely. I want everybody, please, to call me that. Remember, now!"

Nassau, small compared to New York, was still surely big enough to hold the Hendersons and herself without much risk of meeting, or—so long as her name was not used—of their even learning that she was there.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

The uncertain steamer service having closed the Nassau hotels that season, Reese Adams had taken a big house on the west side for his company to live in. Val explored its grounds on the first day with alert curiosity, twirling a green parasol over a white linen shoulder, wondering at her first palm trees, picking orchids for her belt, returning always to the view of green and purple-streaked harbor and the blue, blue sea outside.

Business details engaged Reese, and work for the company was not to begin until to-morrow at nine. With an escort of picture actors Val set out on an exploring walk, and followed a road which led past sisal plantations to a white coral beach, fringed with sea grape and shaded with coco palms.

It was hot, too early in the day for the trade wind, and Val was glad to sit down and slip her fingers through the cool sand. Billy Lloyd and Caspar Dell sat near her, fanning their red faces with their hats and passing big handkerchiefs over damp brows. Val suggested that any one with energy enough to flap a hat should fan her,

and soon had a breeze upon each warm cheek. She leaned back on her hands, her mannerism of half-closed eyes a real necessity as she looked over the sun-smitten sea.

Fred Henderson, plodding along the road on the duty walk that his physician had advised and his mother enforced, crossed the sands of Labouchere where he planned to rest and, becoming aware of a group of people already in possession of the nearest patch of shade, he turned to see if there was any one he was in duty bound to speak to.

For an instant he supposed himself sun-struck, dreaming. Then his vision cleared, and he saw that it was really Val, her hair sparkling in the luminous shadow, her adorable shoulders outlined against the green sunshade, a smile of mocking recognition on her red mouth.

"Hello, Freddy!"

He got over to her as quickly as possible, dropped to the sand beside her.

"How perfectly wonderful for you to be here!"

"I'm not! Val Morgan isn't. Billy, introduce Mr. Henderson to Nadine Wilde, and then withdraw, you two; will you? This is an old friend of mine, and we have a lot to say to each other."

"Upstage!" they said darkly to each other as they sauntered off. "That bird's father must be the one that owns that yacht; you heard her call him Henderson? Upstage!"

Val, meantime, was saying:

"We're making a moving picture, Fred; isn't that fun? I shall be so famous you'll boast of having once married me."

"It's wonderful!" Fred said again, bravely putting his hand over hers.

"It's too hot for holding hands." She withdrew hers decisively.

But Reese Adams' confidence in the picture they were making, his assurance of large profits, and his manner of lightly naming, as her probable share,

an amount five or six times more than she needed, had relaxed the tension of Val's anxiety, made her feel that, in effect, Fred's father was already paid, since it was a matter of weeks now, months at most, before she should have paid him.

The scenes taken in New York had been highly successful. Adams, in his studio, was a different person from Adams in those other studios of the Village. He might be doing violence to his feelings all the while, he might be longing for cigarettes and minor poetry beneath a skylight on a batik-draped divan, but, to the outward eye, he was the embodiment of modern, soulless, businesslike efficiency. He coached Val with results which justified all he had said to her, and indeed acting, when there was no audience to inspire stage fright, no speeches to memorize, presented few difficulties to an imaginative girl.

The sight of Arnold Henderson's yacht the night before, flaunting its arrogance, so far from home, had brought a hot gust of vindictiveness to life again in Val. She was so near buying her freedom that she considered it bought, and she eyed Fred sidelong as he sat cross-legged by her.

"You understand you're not to mention to anybody, your family least of all, that I am here? There's only Nadine Wilde, with a picture outfit. You might if you liked be in some of the scenes. We shall want some gilded youths in white raiment."

"Could I, really? Say, that would be great, wouldn't it?" His face, already beaming with delight to have refound Val, lit to painful eagerness.

"I'll speak to Reese. He was saying he'd need some extras, and that lots of people would do it for a lark. We'll all go out some bright morning together and scuttle the ship."

Fred watched her as she talked on, with the hungry gaze he had always for

her face. The glimpse of her he had had in his own home had been the moment's impression of a radiance, no more, and afterward, in the street, she had been dimly seen. He was studying her now for small changes, and he found them in plenty.

There was not only the present perfection of her clothes, in marked contrast to her old, drear shabbiness; there was, with no loss of freshness, a look of maturity, of sophistication about her long and narrow eyes, a wariness coupled with self-confidence in the firmly closed, rather full, red mouth. One does not dare everything, explore every opening avenue, without meeting some educative surprises. Fred saw only that Val looked older somehow, stronger, less than likely to yield to any pleadings of his. Her face in repose, too, was somehow sad, the thought, with helpless resentment against whoever had made her sad.

She got up after a little more desultory talk. It wasn't necessary, she had seen, to make an effort to regain Fred Henderson, who was pitifully hers without it.

"I must go back and see if Reese wants me to do anything. Turn up early to-morrow morning, and you can come with us in the boat, I'm almost sure."

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

Gregory Sherril, wandering among the out islands in the seagoing motor launch he had hired, fished a little, slept on his boat, loafed, and invited his soul. After New York it was very good to live the vagabond life again, to smell camp fires, to feel one's bleached face burn back to brown.

His existence, however, began to seem not in wakeful moments of, the night only, but under bright, morning sunlight, purposeless and unprofitable. He had meant to stay on the Atlantic

seaboard, within call, for a quick dash to New York, if his dragging business were ever put through. When it was put through, when he could lay his hand on some capital, there would be a dozen plans for investing it in South Sea enterprises. He would become rich. To what end?

He could always work, spasmodically, but with great energy, at the self-set tasks which interested him and, until a few weeks ago, these things had interested him. Now they seemed merely hot and arduous and long.

He wanted that girl in New York, with her gold-buckled slippers on the dirty boards of his boat, and the transparent gold tissue of her overdress showing amber satin gleams, velvet darknesses, underneath. The picture was incongruous; it shouted its own absurdity. But desire is seldom reasonable, and Greg did not even go so far as to dress Val sensibly in his imagination.

People were companionable enough down here, and he picked up the chat of the islands, heard opinions about taxes, the effect on the Bahamas of prohibition in the United States, and gossip which left him cold about moving pictures that were being taken in the vicinity. Reese Adams, a name which Greg remembered vaguely, was the producing star, and his leading woman was called Nadine Wilde. Nothing of this interested him particularly.

It was pure chance which brought him into Nassau harbor on the morning when the picture company was embarking for the last time in the boat that was to be sacrificed to the play. There was a small flotilla engaged about the business, the yacht on which the action took place, the vessel which carried the cameras and their servitors, and a little launch which could run in quickly for rescue work. The attention of the town was concentrated on the departure, and Greg, shutting off his motor

and running slowly in to his landing, stared frankly.

She was barely five yards away from him, standing in a group of men at the stern, looking toward him without taking note of the somewhat-slovenly boat, the gray-shirted young man who occupied it. He couldn't doubt that he saw Miss Smith, as the brilliant light showed him her face, unforgotten, pensive between two bursts of laughter.

Without any conscious taking of a decision, Greg jumped to his engine, started it again, and swung in a long curve away from the pier, to settle to pursuit of the big, white yacht. Other boats were following the picture company, some only across the bay, others farther. One fishing acquaintance of Greg's ran in alongside of him and shouted comments on the enterprise.

"Lot of fool Yankees won't take advice," he yelled. "This is no weather for their antics. I've seen hurricanes come up in no time out of a sky like this; no wind, too, that's bad. Of course this fellow knows it all, says it isn't hurricane season, so we can't have any bad weather. I says, that must be true, but we can have something it would take an expert to tell apart from a hurricane, because I've seen 'em—in this month, too. That boat ain't seaworthy, either. This fellow Adams says it's exactly what he wants, just fit to sink and the price to correspond, and he's had men spilling good paint over her so she'll look pretty just for these days he's used her. Well, I'll be going back myself, I reckon. Maybe she won't blow up till they all get back, and maybe she won't blow up at all right now—you can't tell. But you'll notice most of the shipping is heading in."

Greg saw that the man was right. His own short experience of local weather signs had failed to warn him of storm; the sky was clear enough, the wind was dead. But it was true

that other boats were making for harbor, and he had a sudden pang of fear as the yacht ahead went out to the open under auxiliary power, her useless sails spread for the photography that was already under way.

There was some action going on now at the stern of the boat. Val was struggling in a man's arms, getting away from him, crouching on the gunwale, and probably threatening to throw herself over. Another man emerged from the cabin, and a fight of some savagery ensued. Greg, who alone was left of the floating audience from the town, came a little nearer, interested.

This picture, probably a retake of a scene not quite satisfactory, was soon finished, and the little fleet went on, rather farther than Greg had expected, so that he began to think anxiously about gas and to wish he had taken time to supply himself before following them. Nassau was now out of sight, and a scattered key or two was the only land visible. One of these, he surmised, might have been selected for some familiar Robinson Crusoe scenes; he hoped so, for he knew he could reach this, and probably just manage the return, on the fuel he had. He followed still, with an elaborate pretense of business in the same direction, and the moving-picture party, used to frankly interested onlookers, paid no attention to him at all.

The glimpse of the girl had quickened again the desire for her which he had tried so hard to crush. Perhaps the sight of the other men about her, the embrace in which that big, splendidly built fellow in white had caught her after he had knocked out the villain, had its part in upsetting his reasoned conclusions.

He had almost forgotten that prognostication of danger which had determined him, after the first instinctive swerve after her, to continue his pursuit. The water was oily and still, the



prophecy was several hours old. But he noticed the blurring of the light almost before the camera men did.

To the weather-foolish aliens, the storm came with no other warning. Reese Adams knew, and had told his company, that weather in the tropics is a clockwork affair. There is a season for hurricanes, an hour when the trade winds rise, and an hour when they drop. In some localities it is possible to set watches by the daily thunderstorm. He felt serenely assured that nothing untoward could happen in May, and though the dead calm of the morning was bad for picture purposes, which demanded a breeze to fill the yacht's sails and flutter the dresses and hair of the women, it seemed certain that it could not endure long.

Greg stood up in his boat better to see what land lay near, in what direction the yacht must run before the storm which, he had no doubt now, was all but on them. With no experience of the West Indies in particular, he knew tropic waters, tropic skies, well enough to read the signs of coming trouble. A palm-crowned key lay within attainable distance, and Sherril, remembering what his friend had said of the moving-picture people's foolhardiness and lack of knowledge, came closer to the yacht, meaning to repeat the warning with all emphasis and indicate the tiny coral island as a refuge to be made for at once. There was already activity on the yacht's deck, the big man in white shouting orders, the camera boat coming nearer, a muffled report from below.

It was incredible. Greg, tongue-tied for a moment, with consternation, saw that it was their absurd picture-taking that they were busy about, that they had hailed the light breeze that was a warning of disaster, the momentary blazing out of the sun in a clear patch of sky, as signals to begin. Doubtless no one in the party guessed the danger.

The yacht, duly scuttled, began to take water, to lurch and stumble. Val tore along its upper gunwale with gesturings of despair which in Greg's view were only too appropriate.

"You poor fools!" he shouted, running in as close to the yacht's side as he dared. "Don't you see we're due for a hammer of a storm in about two twos?"

"Don't butt in on the picture like that!" Reese countered angrily. "Yes, I see there's a thunderstorm coming up; that's why we want to shoot these scenes in a hurry without any suggestions from you!"

Greg had no need to answer; answer was made for him. The first puff of wind had died almost as the sails swelled to it, and the succeeding silence was filled by a wide, hushed clamor, a voice which was the onrush, heard from very far over the still sea. Before their eyes, in tense overcrowded seconds, the wheel of the sky showed successive and terrifying changes. The deadness of the north and west showed as massed cloud, suddenly black against the glittering edge of the disappearing sun. Then the whole sky was ink, with wraithlike, ragged vapors racing before the wind which the next instant struck the yacht, smacking it flat over into the water, as with a ruthless hand.

There was blinding rain in the gale which blew stronger with each moment, shouting, veering, raising the water into a frightened flight of great waves, tumbling at cross purposes. Greg's boat was water swept, and he bailed madly, maneuvering his way painfully about the dangerous wreckage of the yacht.

The people on her—but his thought was for one girl—might have been flung under her, struck, crushed; or by a marvel have been washed wide and be struggling there. He thought of sharks, and peering through the storm dusk he saw a white shoulder, a wild face, a tangle of red hair.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NOVEMBER NUMBER.



# A Woman Who Lied

By Louise Maunsell Field

BEECHAM stepped out on to the freedom of the terrace with an involuntary sigh of relief. The atmosphere of tension pervading that room on the other side of the house, where the two women were, had grown almost unbearable. He was glad to escape into the balmy freshness of the September night, dewy, drenched with fragrance from newly mown lawn and flower-filled garden. The serene beauty of this home of his had never failed to give him a keen pleasure. Yet, next moment, he took out his watch and, glancing at it automatically, realized how thoroughly he had been permeated, infected, as it were, by the suspense he had hoped to evade for a while.

It wasn't in the least Aline's fault. Beecham, pacing restlessly up and down the brick-paved terrace and pushing a chintz-cushioned easy-chair out of his way with an impatient hand, reflected that never before had he so heartily admired his wife's younger sister as during this time of waiting. The courage, the self-control, the fine, unshakable loyalty with which she was taking it all, proved her to be, in more than the accident of birth, Helen's sister. And Helen, his wife, was, in his eyes, the very perfection of womanhood. He could conceive of no higher praise! And if his own nerves were overstrung, what must Aline's be? For while Gil-

bert Wrenshaw was to him no more, if no less, than half a dozen other men, to Aline he was her chosen lover, her future husband, perhaps!

He had smoked a cigarette hurriedly, an impatient frown making unaccustomed lines on his usually genial countenance, which quite truthfully declared that its owner had found the world a very pleasant place, as men who are young, rich, healthy, and popular, not infrequently do. He had made a kind of bargain with himself that until the cigarette was finished he would not look again at his watch, and now he drew it forth, eagerly, if a little shamefacedly.

It was really absurd to be counting the minutes this way. Carew couldn't possibly arrive for at least a good half hour, even if he were not detained at the pier, as he almost certainly would be. Reporters would be sure to swarm there, for his coming had been heralded in every newspaper. And after he got away from them it was a full forty-five minutes' run from New York to this particular corner of Long Island. Cautious Martin would not drive the car one bit faster than usual, though the flooding moonlight clearly defined all objects. The great horse-chestnut trees on the lawn loomed black in its radiance, as did the double lines of splendid oaks bordering the roadway which swept in a wide curve to the main en-

trance on the other side of the big, rambling house where Aline and Helen waited. No earthly use in expecting Carew as yet. But he was sorry he hadn't gone for Carew himself with the racer, instead of sending Martin and the heavy touring car.

That it should be Carew who was coming—Carew, and none other, who was to bring them the truth about Gilbert Wrenshaw! Carew, who had himself so long wanted to marry Aline!

If only she had accepted him—as Helen and he had, at one time, thought and hoped she would—the old reliable friend they had known and trusted for years, and of whom Aline, too, had always been so fond! Perhaps Helen was right when she insisted that that was just it—that just because he was such an old and reliable friend he lacked those elements of excitement and romance which quite evidently had thrilled Aline throughout Wrenshaw's headlong courtship. It was, of course, no wonder that Wrenshaw should have fallen in love, almost at first sight, with Aline's delicate, high-bred beauty—her cherry-blossom loveliness, as one ardent admirer had phrased it—and scarcely more strange that she should have been fascinated by so handsome and gallant and debonair a lover. Girls were like that! And though Carew, dear old fellow, was clean grit through and through, he certainly wasn't either handsome or gallant or debonair! And no one could deny that Wrenshaw and Aline made a stunningly good-looking couple, while plain-faced, square-browed, heavy-shouldered Brandon Carew—well, no doubt about it, he'd been pretty much out of the running from the moment Wrenshaw appeared!

Beecham frowned again. He'd liked Wrenshaw, liked him a whole lot, but from the bottom of his soul he wished he'd never asked him to the house, much less introduced him to Aline! If

he hadn't, Aline would probably have married Carew, and there wouldn't be any of this confounded anxiety and apprehension. Was Carew, too, thinking of what so easily might have been, while he came hurrying toward them as fast as train and boat and automobile could bring him? It certainly was mighty hard on Carew!

Whichever way you looked at it, Beecham thought, as he lit another cigarette and once more began to walk slowly up and down the terrace, whichever way you looked at it, the poor, old chap was in anything but an enviable position. If Wrenshaw were innocent, as Aline so firmly maintained, and as he himself was inclined to believe—well, it couldn't be particularly agreeable for the man who loved her to be obliged to assure her that there wasn't any reason why she shouldn't marry his rival! And if Wrenshaw were guilty—why, then it would be even more awkward for him, since of those who knew the truth he alone was available, and it was on his word that they must rely either to welcome Wrenshaw or to turn from him as from one who had put himself forever outside the pale.

It was all a beastly mess, the very beastliest mess with which he, as an ordinarily decent human being, had ever had to do.

And so thoroughly unnecessary! For those three men, free-lance writer, sociologist, and adventure lover, to try to make their way, unauthorized, into the very heart of turbulent Russia, there to study conditions, was just a piece of harebrained folly. Ah, well, two of them had paid the utmost penalty!

The night was warm, but he shivered a little, nevertheless, as he thought of the story which had so recently reached his ears, the story of how Lane and Grannis died.

Of the three, Wrenshaw alone had

been saved. And the Red Cross workers, of whom Brandon Carew, M.D., was chief, had found him solitary and sickening, in an abandoned hut. Of the three, Wrenshaw alone was coming home.

And it might have been better, much, much better, had he, too, died out there at the hands of the plundering soldiers. Certainly better, if the whispered tale were true—the tale that Carew was coming, perhaps to deny, perhaps to affirm—that Wrenshaw had bought his own safety by the betrayal of his comrades.

They had died horribly. And he was alive.

Beecham shook his blond head and broad shoulders as if hoping thus to shake off his unwelcome thoughts. Why expect the worst? The remnants of the half-crazed army were probably capricious. They might have spared him because they liked the color of his hair! And to believe that the man Aline had promised to marry could be a traitor, a betrayer! Why, it was preposterous! Simply preposterous. Surely she must share something, at least, of that swift intuition of Helen's, which was so rarely at fault. When Carew came, they—

*What was that?*

Every sense on the alert, he bent forward over the stone parapet, peering into the deceptive moonlight.

Was his imagination playing tricks on him, or had he really seen a figure slipping up the driveway toward the lawn, stealing warily from shadow to shadow? There had been more than one attempted burglary among the great houses in this section of the country.

There it was again! No possibility of mistake this time. Some one was sneaking up the drive.

A bare instant he hesitated, wondering what it was best to do; then he passed quickly through the long French window which opened into his own den,

took a revolver from a desk drawer, and hurried back to the terrace. But this time he was careful to keep within the shadow cast by an outjutting angle of the house. He wanted to discover for what part of the building the fellow was making.

He felt, in truth, almost grateful to the marauder. It was good to have something, anything, with which to occupy one's mind during this time of waiting!

Still the man approached, stealing stealthily from shadow to shadow. For an anxious moment Beecham lost sight of him. Then saw him again, and saw him heading straight toward the terrace. Probably he hoped to enter the house by one of the French windows. Beecham grinned cheerfully, tightening his hold on his weapon. He was an excellent shot.

In the thick, velvet-black shadow of one of the great horse-chestnuts, the man paused an instant. Then—there being, indeed, no other way to reach the house—he came out into the moonlight and started to cross the lawn. And now, for the first time, Beecham noticed that he moved uncertainly, with a feeble, dragging step. Once or twice he swayed a little. It was as if his will were forcing his body forward.

Nearer he came, and nearer. Presently he was at the foot of the broad flight of steps leading to the terrace. Clutching the balustrade, he ascended slowly and, as it seemed, painfully, pulling himself up from tread to tread. At the top he stood still a moment, leaning for support against the stone pillar. He lifted his bent head. The moonlight shone full upon his face.

"Wrenshaw!" Beecham muttered, bewildered and aghast. "Wrenshaw! Is it really you?"

There was genuine uncertainty in the exclamation. That emaciated body, on which the clothing hung so loosely, that white and haggard face, with its parch-

mentlike skin stretched tightly over the protruding bones, the burning eyes in whose depths lurked something Beecham could not, would not divine—were they indeed Wrenshaw's? Wrenshaw, the gay and gallant, the reckless and debonair—was this ghastly wreck Wrenshaw?

"Has—Carew—come yet?" Wrenshaw gasped, with an all but superhuman effort.

"No, not yet."

"Thank—thank——"

Beecham caught his arm as he swayed.

"Hang it, man, sit down here! You're all in!" he exclaimed. "There now! Wait a minute; I'll get you some brandy."

Wrenshaw's gesture detained him.

"Don't tell—any one—I'm here. I've got to see Carew first. I've been waiting until I heard he was on his way. I've got to see him first." His drawn lips quivered. "I've got to—to *know*."

"To know?" repeated Beecham, every second more bewildered.

Wrenshaw had not sat down; but rather fallen into a chair. The knavish moonlight crept forward and slyly displayed his twitching hands. Curiously twisted hands they were, Beecham noticed half consciously.

"To know what—what he says about me."

"He'll tell the truth!" There was something verging on irritation in Beecham's customarily amiable tone. He instinctively resented what seemed like an insinuation against the good faith of the man who was his closest friend.

"Yes." Wrenshaw spoke dully, with a kind of complete, unquestioning acceptance. Brandon Carew would tell the truth. His doing so was certain, was only a matter of course. There was an instant's pause before he added, very low and with an almost feverish haste: "That's what I want to be sure

of—the truth. Why, I couldn't have done it! I couldn't have told those devils where they were. I just couldn't. It's impossible!"

Beecham's knowledge bridged some of the fissures in that speech; not all. It was of revealing to the wandering soldiery where Lane and Grannis lay hidden that Wrenshaw was accused. But—

"Well, you certainly must know what you did better than any one else," he replied, platitudinously and a little doubtfully.

The bloodless hands twitched suddenly; a livid scar flared in the moonlight, and vanished. Wrenshaw lifted his haunted eyes to the other's face.

"My memory," he said painfully, "my memory has gone back on me. There's a—a sort of a gap. They took me and—and began to do things to me, until I came to myself in the hospital. I don't remember what I did all the time, or what I—said."

Beecham caught his breath. He had believed Wrenshaw was there in order to defend himself, to deny any and every accusation which might be brought against him. This was worse; a very great deal worse.

"Do you mean to say that you actually don't know whether or not you told where they were?" he had begun more than half incredulously, when the faint sound of a distant horn interrupted him. A motor car had swung in between the gates. It was speeding up the drive.

"Carew!" Wrenshaw cried in a queer, choking whisper. "It's Carew! Stop him! Oh, for God's sake, stop him! Don't let *her* see him first!"

With a quick grip of his hand on Wrenshaw's shoulder, Beecham showed how well he understood. Then he sprang down the steps and raced across the lawn and along the road, running as he had never run before. Aline must not have the truth thrust upon her in



all its raw horror—if it were horrible! And Wrenshaw himself did not know whether or not he was guilty. He had protested that he could not have done this vile thing, that it was impossible; he had protested alike to Beecham and to himself. But Beecham had looked deep down into his eyes and there he had seen reflected the bewildered pain of a soul tortured by self-distrust, a soul that was afraid.

Before him Beecham seemed to see again those twitching, twisted hands, the livid scar which had, for a moment, flashed into sight, entirely dumb, indescribably eloquent. And a pity that was half repulsion swept over him and, in all humility of spirit, he questioned whether, in Wrenshaw's place, he, Harry Beecham, would be able to trust himself, to feel absolutely sure that he had not spoken.

He ran as if it were he, not Wrenshaw, whom the fear pursued.

Heaven be praised! He was in time! The automobile was still too far away to be seen or heard from the drawing-room at the farther side of the house where Aline and Helen were. He stopped it and almost dragged Carew from his seat in the tonneau. Quickly, briefly as might be, he told him of Gilbert Wrenshaw's coming, while hurrying him along toward the terrace where Wrenshaw waited. Even though it were but to plunge him into a knowledge that would mean despair, he must liberate Wrenshaw from the agony of uncertainty in which he lay!

Tacitly, and with a perfect, mutual understanding, these two good friends, who had not seen each other in many months, had put their own concerns aside for a while; time enough for those later on, when the imperious present was past. Beecham talked fast and breathlessly, but very low. So still was the night it seemed as if even a whisper must be audible far off. A faint breeze from the sea barely stirred

to a murmurous rustling the topmost branches of the great trees. The buzz and hum of the insect life had long since been hushed, but somewhere in the soft, thick darkness a cricket shrilled intermittently.

Carew's strong, plain face grew fixed and grim as he listened, but he interrupted only once, and that was when Beecham alluded to Wrenshaw's loss of memory.

"Yes; all that's perfectly true. He was just coming down with pneumonia when we got him away from Demetri-offski, the ex-droshky driver they'd made a captain in their plundering army. A sweet-tempered, amiable creature, if ever there was one. Flogging and murder were meat and drink to him."

"Was Wrenshaw's memory gone then?" Beecham asked quickly.

"No; he was quite all right, mentally." There was more than a tinge of reluctance in the admission. "Later, though, he went out of his head completely, and when his sanity returned his memory didn't. At least, that was what Doctor Rankin told me afterward."

They had reached the terrace at last. They were hastening up those broad, familiar steps which Carew and Aline had so often mounted side by side, returning from a tennis match or horseback ride to rest beneath the cool shade of the gayly striped awnings. But only the monotonous shrilling of the unseen cricket sounded now, where their laughter had echoed on many and many a summer day.

Wrenshaw lay stretched out among the chintz-covered cushions of the chair in which Beecham had left him. He lifted himself slowly and with obvious difficulty as Carew approached. For a long, tense moment the two men stared at each other in silence. The haggard face of the one seemed to quiver a little under the strain, while that of the other was as set and mo-

tionless as stone. And what passed between them during that long moment none ever knew.

It was Wrenshaw who spoke first, again voicing the barren, piteous protest with which he seemed striving to convince himself rather than to bring conviction to others.

"I couldn't have done it!" The words were scarcely more than a whisper. "They said I had, but I couldn't. I've been waiting for you to come, to be sure, but I *couldn't* have done it!"

Carew drew a long, deep breath, as a man does who is trying to nerve himself to take some desperate plunge.

"Why not?" he asked, after a pause which seemed endless. His voice was perfectly quiet and perfectly toneless when he presently added: "Why not? Other men have done such things, things that didn't seem like them, things they didn't at all want to do."

Wrenshaw shrank back, quivering. Even so, perhaps, had he shrunk from Demetrioifski's torments. An instant, and he exclaimed excitedly:

"Other men, yes; but not I! Nor any really decent chap! I'm no hero, of course, but I never was a cheat or a liar or a—*a coward!* I couldn't have done it; I *know* I couldn't!"

And the shivering eagerness in his voice belied the confident words.

Again in the silence which followed, the cricket shrilled harshly. Carew stood looking down at Wrenshaw, and his expression changed a little as the doctor temporarily triumphed over the man.

"You're a great deal too ill to be wandering around out here," he said brusquely, but not unkindly. "You ought to be in a sanitarium. That dose of pneumonia——"

"I came because I heard you were coming. I couldn't stand"—he moistened his dry lips—"I couldn't stand the waiting."

"Well, I certainly didn't expect to

see you here." The phrase, futile, banal, spoken so evidently as an excuse for seizing and prolonging a respite, had in it an uncertainty altogether foreign to strong-willed Carew. Into his steady, gray eyes had come a sudden restlessness, a sudden seeking. Yet his inflectionless tones were still as colorless as iron, and as hard.

"I came because I heard you were coming," Wrenshaw repeated. And now the quivering eagerness in his voice was transfused with entreaty. "I had to see you first, before I saw Aline."

Instantly a change swept over Carew's grim and rigid face. It was not a softening, but a flash of anger. He seemed to be holding back by sheer force words he longed to utter and would not.

Again Wrenshaw's hoarse pleading broke the intolerable silence.

"I couldn't have done it!" The oft-repeated phrase had sunk into a mere trembling whisper. "They tried to make me tell, tried every way. And when I screamed they laughed. Oh, my God! They laughed!"

That was more than soft-hearted Beecham could endure.

"He's innocent, Carew! He must be! For pity's sake, tell him he's innocent!" he exclaimed vehemently.

And even as the words passed his lips, he knew that he was appealing to Carew for a lie, knew that, in his heart, he believed Wrenshaw guilty.

Carew took an abrupt step forward; then he checked himself sharply, and paused. His long, lean hands clenched and unclenched themselves slowly. His whole frame was taut now, and rigid, but his eyes never left that other man's face.

"I am innocent! I couldn't have done it, I *couldn't*! I've always played fair. You know, Carew, you know——"

And the doubt that was tearing at

Wrenshaw's heart pushed its way through his shaking voice.

"Yes, I know," Carew replied, deliberately accepting the none too generous reminder. "You did play fair with me, Wrenshaw, always. I know you did."

Again he paused; again that seeking look had come into those steady eyes of his, which had long since learned to gaze unflinchingly, unwaveringly, at approaching pain or disappointment.

But Beecham could endure the suspense no longer.

"Hurry up, man, hurry up!" he cried. "Tell us; don't keep us waiting like this! Aline may be out here any moment!"

"Aline!" Wrenshaw struggled somehow to his feet. "Don't let Aline——"

A dreadful spasm of coughing rose and choked him. Into the soft hush of the peaceful night the ugly sound broke, rasping, harsh, and discordant. He slipped down again among the cushions of the chair and lay there, burying his head in his arms, trying as best he might to stifle what he could not control.

But the mischief was done.

Came quick-falling footsteps, a soft, silken rustle. One of the long French windows flew open, and Aline, tall and straight and slim, stood before them, there where they had so often chaffed and laughed together. Shimmering folds of satin and chiffon swathed her lithe young body; pearls glimmered about her slender throat; the coils of her dark hair crowned her royally, but her lips were white in the moonlight. Just behind her was her sister Helen, Beecham's wife, looking grave now, and anxious.

"What is it?" Aline demanded impatiently. "Who is it?"

Her glance flashed past Beecham. It met Carew's gray eyes, and lingered, welcoming, questioning; then broke and wavered and fled away.

"Who is it?" she asked again. "Who was——"

Suddenly a cry rang out from her white lips, a cry no one of those who heard it could soon forget, a cry of amazement and alarm and—something else:

"Gilbert!"

She flung her hands out toward her old friend, flung them out blindly, in a strange, imploring gesture, a gesture that was almost one of terror. For an instant she stood tense and white and motionless. The note of the cricket, monotonous, nerve-racking, shrilled again through the shivering silence.

To Beecham it seemed afterward that no one of them had even so much as breathed while they watched her. What was she going to say? What, above all, was she going to do? Again her glance flashed to meet Carew's, and again it fled away, fled back to where Wrenshaw lay, shaken and gasping. And then——

She ran to him, she dropped on her knees beside the chair, she took the shuddering, emaciated body in her arms and drew the stricken head down upon her breast.

Beecham turned away. To stand there watching would be like violating a sanctuary. But as he turned he looked at Carew. The doctor's face retained its rigid mask; not a muscle of it moved nor even quivered, but his hands were clenched so tightly that the knuckles strained white and seemed about to start through the taut flesh. In the background Helen waited, her lovely face grave and compassionate; a tender, brooding look that was all but maternal in her deep-blue eyes. Her mere presence conveyed comfort, Beecham thought, and a sense as of something fine and beautiful resting secure above and beyond all this pain and perplexity and horror.

Wrenshaw's voice brought him back with a start.

"No, Aline, no! Not yet, not until— But I couldn't have done it, I couldn't! They hurt me! Oh, they hurt me horribly, and I was sick, and I can't remember! But I couldn't have done it, I *couldn't* have done it!"

Aline's tone was very gentle.

"Of course you couldn't, dear. I know that. And everything's going to be all right now; quite, quite all right."

Still with her arm about him, still holding his head pressed against her body, she looked up, facing that man who loved her and who knew the truth, the one man who knew whether Gilbert Wrenshaw were indeed a traitor or the innocent victim of a hideous lie. Their glances met and crossed like swords. Aline's teeth caught and held her lower lip for a moment, but she kept her head high. And after a little—

"He did not do it," she said quite calmly.

In her tone was nothing of challenge. She asserted; she did not question, neither did she defy. As Carew and Wrenshaw had looked at each other a few minutes before, steadily, unswervingly, even so did Carew and Aline look at each other now. This time her glance did not waver, but held firm as Carew's own. And to Beecham it seemed that all the night about them waited, waited with suspended breath, for the outcome of that wordless communion.

And then, at last, Carew drew back a step, squaring his heavy shoulders. Quietly, deliberately, he bent his head, as though in salutation. And when he lifted it again his face was gray and very weary. And when he spoke his carefully steadied, inflectionless tones were the tones of one who had fought

a desperate battle and emerged victorious, but at a fearful cost.

"You are right! He did not do it," he said.

Aline uttered no word. It was Wrenshaw who cried, "Thank God!" just before he fainted.

Helen hastily summoned the butler and the footman. They carried Wrenshaw into the house and upstairs to one of the guest rooms, Aline and Helen following them. On the threshold Aline hesitated, glancing back as if to say something. Apparently thinking better of it, she turned again and went away in silence. But her look was at once baffling and strangely eloquent:

Now Beecham, in his turn, faced Carew. During those few moments he had learned much.

"Why did you lie to her?" he demanded impulsively. "You love her, too. Why did you lie—and lose your chance?"

Carew confronted him, almost savagely.

"Great God, man! Don't you understand? He's dying; he can't live a month! And she loves him! Do you suppose I could have soiled the memory that's all she'll have to help her through the years? It wasn't possible!"

"No; it wasn't possible." Helen, she who was Beecham's wife and Aline's sister, had come quietly out upon the terrace, unperceived by either of the two men. "No; it wasn't possible; not for you," she repeated reflectively. "But Aline—why, didn't you see that Aline knew the truth, and from the very first? It was not you, it was Aline who lied, lied for his sake, and"—she paused, carefully weighing her words before she added very gently—"for his sake, and—for yours!"





# In Broadway Playhouses

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By Dorothy Parker

## The Banalities of 1921

THE great trouble lies in expecting too much of a thing. Just as long as you don't let yourself get all keyed up beforehand, everything could scarcely be sweeter. But once work up a fever of anticipation over some coming event, and go about crossing out days on the calendar and figuring the number of intervening hours—when the big day finally dawns, all is lost save ennui. Anticlimax is your bitter portion. The long-awaited event will fall flat with a dull, sickening sound, as of a myriad “blah’s.”

It used to be that way, if you'll remember, about Christmas. Beginning along around January first, the next Christmas would be dangled in front of you, alternately as a threat and a promise. If you committed such modest crimes as lay within your scope, you were promptly informed that it looked like a pretty thin Christmas for you. While if you were uniquely pure and noble around the house, instead of being suitably rewarded then and there as would have been no more than honest, it was merely indicated that if you could just hold out until December twenty-fifth, something really handsome would be done for you.

So you dragged yourself through endless weary months, waiting for that one day. It didn't seem as if you could

make the last week or so without snapping under the nervous strain. But, finally, in the bleak dawn of Christmas, you crawled downstairs, spent with anticipation, and groggy from a sleepless night. And for what? To find that Santa Claus and loving relatives had remembered you with six appropriately initialed handkerchiefs, a pair of galoshes that you would have had to have anyway, a pocket dictionary, a pasteboard game called “Dissected Wild Flowers,” a copy of “Sylvia's Summer in the Holy Lands,” and a fountain pen that ceased to function after the third using.

Now I don't say that these things would not have been so much velvet, if you had not been lashing yourself into a frenzy of expectation for the better part of a year beforehand. If you had only put Christmas completely out of your head until the late evening of December twenty-fourth, and then had said to yourself, “Ho hum, so to-morrow's Christmas! Well, I can sleep late,” the array of gifts would have seemed little short of dazzling. The thing was, as I was saying only a moment ago, that you had trained yourself to expect too much.

And that is the way it is with the “Follies.” (You see, this is a review of the current shows, after all.)



Just suppose that the phrase "the Follies" meant absolutely nothing in your blameless life. Suppose you happened to be strolling by the Globe Theater, and a sign spelling out "Ziegfeld Follies of 1921" met your eye. Caught by the quaint name, you bought a seat and went in, tolerantly expecting it to be just another of those summer revues. You would emerge from the theater about eleven o'clock thinking that you had seen a good show, and resolved to tell your friends as much. In which opinion, one hastens to add, you would be wholly justified.

But the idea is, the public has been brought up to expect so much of the "Follies" that, no matter how good they may be, one is always conscious of a little flicker of disappointment. The glory of tradition surrounds them; there is a glamour in their very name. They are a national institution, like the Chautauqua or "Laddie Boy." They are the one show that everybody wants to see. The transient could never face the folks back home if he had not been to see the "Follies" during the course of his metropolitan visit; the native New Yorker cannot consider himself worthy of the name unless he has witnessed the latest edition of them. It wouldn't make the slightest difference what the critics might hint about them. Everybody is going to see the "Follies," let the reviewers like them or not.

The "Follies" have come to represent, in the theatergoer's mind, the ultimate in beauty, art, music, dancing, and wit. Expectation quickens his pulse and raises his temperature as he makes his annual pilgrimage to them. But annually he experiences a vague feeling that perhaps the show is not quite so wonderful as he thought it was going to be. And that any show could be quite that good is somewhat doubtful. Though not, after all, utterly impossible.

If you consider the current "Follies"

not as a national institution but as a summer show—and let's do it that way, for a change—it is decidedly above the average. When you sit back and take a good look at the average, it will develop that this is merely praising the "Follies" with faint damns. So we should be safe in letting ourselves go farther and stating, with a careful eye on the other attractions displayed for the summer months, that the "Follies" is far and away the best of them.

It is, of course, lovely to look at. Goodness knows where the Ziegfeld girls come from! Certainly one never sees anything like them around anywhere else. If, of the girls on view in the usual musical show, you can pick out one that you can conscientiously rate Grade A, two that have a lot of personality, and four that look as if they might be awfully nice after you get to know them, you consider that you have indeed been seeing life. But the "Follies" line-up is a hundred per cent perfect. One observes the husbands present, as they leave the theater, looking at their wives with a cold eye and a discouraged shake of the head. "To think they make girls like that!" they seem to say. "And here I am!"

The scenic effects, too, are charming. It is evident that more than a thought has been given to John Murray Anderson and his cloudy chiffon draperies, and the results are exquisite. The costumes, particularly those designed by James Reynolds, are gorgeous in color. Mr. Reynolds has arranged a scene called "The Birthday of the Dauphin," which officially opens the second act. It is just one of those things, when you come right down to it, in which each member of the cast enters separately and presents a gift to the bored little Dauphin—who, by the way, seems, to these weary eyes, about the only desirable child to appear on the stage this season. It is but one of those things during which one usually pores

over the program or whispers inquiries as to what time of night it is getting to be; but it goes to show what some one like Mr. Reynolds can do with a thing like that when he sets his mind to it.

The music of the "Follies" is all right as long as the orchestra is playing it, but, save for a song called "Sally, Come Back to Our Alley," you'd never give it another thought. The "Sally" number has been running doggedly through our head ever since we attended the show, and those near and dear to us have several times intimated that it would be all right for them if we would render some other selection while dressing. Van and Schenck, who have hitherto been generously supplied with good songs, have a list of decidedly indifferent ones this year. Also, they sing individually, now and then, and this arrangement does not work out for the good of the majority.

As to dancing, the leaders in that field are a lady and a gentleman named respectively Mitti and Tilio—it sounds as if Maeterlinck had thought them up—who came over from Paris for the occasion. Personally, I have never been able to derive much benefit from those dances in which the man stands, grimly braced for the onslaught, on one side of the stage, while the lady gets a good running start from the other side and hurls herself upon him. But if there must be that sort of dance—if, as I say, there must be—Mitti and Tilio are the people to do it. It seems to be so little trouble to them.

Florence O'Denishawn also dances, and so, in a manner of speaking, does Mary Eaton. Miss Eaton is delightfully pretty, but her style of dancing is much that of the precocious little one who leads the Snowflakes' Gavotte when Miss Eby's junior dancing class gives its exhibition before breaking up for the holidays.

Along the line of comedy, there is some that is good, and much that, in a

word, isn't. There is one wholly gratifying scene, "Off to the Country," written by W. C. Fields, who has suddenly stopped juggling and turned into a most gifted comedian, and acted by the author, Fannie Brice, Raymond Hitchcock, and Ray Dooley. Then there is a scene in which Mr. Hitchcock appears as a magician. We are no authority on legerdemain, for we are invariably amazed and bewildered if some one is able to palm a five-cent piece, or select from a pack the card which we previously drew. But it certainly seems as if, even to more practiced eyes, Mr. Hitchcock would appear to be a highly proficient magician.

That is, unfortunately, about all they have given him to do that could come under the head of fun for one and all. He has an incredibly dreary monologue about prohibition, and some peculiarly pitiful prohibition jokes, and a song about how much better conditions would be to-day "if Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrims, instead of the Pilgrims landing on the Rock." But that line is really all there is to the song, and if, as is more than probable, you have been meeting the line in comic papers and in vaudeville right along, much of the snap is removed.

They have been considerably kinder to Fannie Brice. She has several good songs—or maybe they wouldn't be so good if some one else sang them; it's hard to tell, for she can make so much of them. This year she takes a brief plunge into the serious, singing the interpolated "Mon Homme," or, as you Americans say, "My Man," which, even before the "Follies" started, had become as pervading as "The Love Nest" was around this time last season. Maybe its equal popularity is due to the fact that its lyric is just about as polished. Miss Brice sings it remarkably, although handicapped by the fact that you are constantly expecting her to be funny.

The effect of her song is, however, thoroughly messed up by a burlesque Apache dance which Ray Dooley and Charles O'Donnell perform immediately after it. One had thought that the burlesque Apache dance had vanished from our boards along in 1915. It just goes to show that you shouldn't go about giving thanks too soon, or something like this will come along and make a spectacle of you.

In the same vein as the Apache dance is a prize fight, with Fannie Brice as Carpentier and Ray Dooley as Dempsey. This fantasy occurs, if I may recall it to your attention, not in a burlesque show, but in the "Follies"—the ultimate in beauty, art, and wit.

Other events of the evening are a burlesque of "Camille," which somehow escapes being funny, despite Fannie Brice's line, "I've been a bad woman—but such good company;" and an ex-vaudeville act, "The Piano Tuner." Mr. Charles O'Donnell, playing the title rôle, does some of the most painful-looking things ever seen on the New York stage. He falls off a tall ladder previously balanced on the top of a piano; he is hit on the head with various weighty objects; he falls agonizingly over and off everything within reach. You have to keep telling yourself, "Now look here, he does this thing every night and two matinées and he doesn't mind it a bit. He's probably thinking about what he's going to do after the show all the time. You know perfectly well that the first thing they have to do is learn how to fall so that they won't be hurt." This line of argument helps a little, but the act is one prolonged wince for all that.

Well, and there, as the saying goes, you are. The "Follies of 1921" is always gorgeous to behold, is no great strain to listen to, and frequently affords you a healthy laugh. Nothing particularly startling in the way of novelties, and nothing to knock you out

of your seat in the way of song hits. But, after all, what do you expect for your five dollars and fifty cents' admission?

Speaking of heavy toll, that is just what the hot weather has taken of the theaters. Nothing had the heart to open during the tropical days. After the "Follies"—oh, a long way after—there was nothing to see but "The Scandals of 1921," George White's third annual production.

"Well, there's nothing cheap about this show!" declared the lady who sat next to me at the "Scandals." And she'd tax herself to say a truer thing. Barring the book, the jokes, most of the songs, and the work of the comedians, there is nothing cheap about the show.

The "Scandals" are lavishly costumed and decorated, and there is a generously endowed chorus, although, once you have seen the "Follies" girls, the "Scandals" beauties look like members of the class of naughty-seven of the Fall River High School. To the chorus falls the best part of the entertainment, next to Mr. White's dancing—the lyrics which they speak early in the first act. You think for a while that all the show is going to be like that, and you take heart; but the authors and actors quickly put you in your place again, and you realize that it is just another "Scandals."

Among the things which compose the program is a song called, oddly enough, "I Love You," which introduces several showgirls, each of whom renders the chorus in a different language. While the lady who does it in French is warbling "J'oy vuzz aime," those present are right on the edges of their seats. Another charming interlude is a burlesque of the Stillman divorce trial, masquerading under the adroit title of the "Sillyman Case." This, I think, sets a new record for bad taste, for the season of 1921.

But, surely, most inspired of all is the finale of the first act. Against a backdrop showing North America and the Canal Zone—Panama is represented as being slightly broader than Texas—enter Colonel Goethals; Theodore Roosevelt in roughrider costume; the chorus, as laborers, dressed in blue satin overalls; three allegorical figures representing the gold, silver, and copper from the United States Mint; several ladies in tights, impersonating various Allies; and Ann Pennington in pink, white, and blue, as, it seems, "A Plea for United States Shipping to Pass

Through the Canal Without Paying Tolls." There is a stirring song to this effect, during which one has a chance to observe that those on the stage seem to be in somewhat of a haze as to what it is all about. This applies with equal truth to the audience.

After his success with the Panama Canal number, Mr. White might try working up something about the Louisiana purchase for the finale of his next year's entertainment. And the Missouri Compromise would be snappy and up to the minute for his 1923 show.



### SUCCESS

I TRIED to balance on my knee  
A plate of toast, a cup of tea.  
"I wish," she said, "before you go,  
You'd tell me something I don't know!"

Her lips were parted in a smile.  
I looked at her and thought a while.  
Could I but manage to surprise  
A look of interest in those eyes!

At length I said, "You asked for this.  
There're other girls I'd rather kiss,  
And places where I'd rather be  
Than here beside you having tea."

Two danger signals were her eyes,  
As anger overcame surprise.  
And I arose, prepared to leave.  
But then, her hand upon my sleeve,

And then her voice, subdued and low—  
I promised her I would not go  
And stayed, to balance on my knee  
Some cake and two more cups of tea.

RAE ALLAN.

# Talks With Ainslee's Readers

**H**AVE you the instinct of a reformer? Do short skirts, the cacophonous soul of jazz, churchless Sundays, and other sundry present-day vicious indulgences wake in you that irrepressible righteous indignation which makes you long to "right" things and so speed the coming of the more Utopian state of affairs?

**O**R maybe yours is a more limited, if just as acute, ambition for bettering the scheme of things. Maybe you'd rest content if you could just plant it in your cook's mind that dry toast is infinitely to be preferred to buttered toast? Or mayhap you'd die happy if only some one wouldn't rumple your morning paper before you poised it for your own casual matutinal glance?

**J**UST as surely as the government collects your income tax, there's some little thing that touches your existence that you'd just as lief "fix," something you'd improve by "just getting your hands" on it. We all have it—the desire to reform something or somebody, to jack up the little details of living and adjust things more pleasantly.

**B**UT how many of us are so assured in our convictions that we'd risk public discussion—more, public censure and ridicule!—for the sake of working a reform, calculated to benefit the very public that jeers? Be it whispered: "Few of us."

**J**OHAN PAUL had the reform instinct and had it bad. Even without the mental castigations of his revered uncle he had the soul of a Garrison or a John Brown. And he did the inevitable—he set out, like legions before him, to make the world a more beautiful place to live in. But his convictions paled quickly under the scorching invective of the masses he sought to assail. And on the rebound from the taunts and gibes of the unsympathetic world, John Paul fell in with Evelyn Ord, a highly colored type of woman. An easy victim, in his harassed state, to her wiles, he accompanied her and several sparkling debutantes on a yachting cruise. And at about this stage, the astute representative of a well-known scandal sheet appeared. Only Henry C. Rowland can tell this tale with the proper high lights, and he does it most dramatically in the November AINSLEE'S. You'll remember "Salvage Claims" long after you've read it.

**H**AVE you aphasia? Probably not. But suppose you found yourself, perfectly normal and happy off in Hawaii, and yet with no definite associations or memories of your life up to that point? Disconcerting, you'll admit. But suppose in addition, at twelve o'clock, noon, and at four o'clock in the afternoon, regularly, you found yourself saying with absolute conviction and feeling, "Hello, Marcia!"

**S**OME time next year a new book is to be heralded in much the same way that several best-seller novels were acclaimed last winter. The title of it is, "Hello, Marcia!" And its author is Meade Minnigerode. Be in at the discovery of this unique novel. Begin it in the November AINSLEE'S.

**K**ING RICHARD III., of England, had a withered arm. A popular explanation of that affliction is: that Jane Shaw, who had desire for vengeance against him in her heart, made a wax model of him and stuck pins into its arm. And the monarch's arm suffered deterioration. Believe it or not. Camilla loved Lynton Sturgis as she loved life itself. And because he loved Jane Meriman, she "fed herself by inches to the flames of the bottomless pit of hell." Meanwhile, nevertheless, she achieved great fame throughout New York for her ingenious wax models, which, the critics said, equaled in cleverness of execution the famous ones of the Morgan collection. She seemed to concentrate on models of those people for whom she felt a consuming dislike. And strange things befell their prototypes. Was Camilla another Jane Shore? "The Wax Duchess" by Alicia Ramsey is the most wholly fascinating story we have printed in a long time. This author's last story, "The Marionettes," brought us hundreds of letters of appreciative comment. After the appearance of "The Wax Duchess" we shall expect to have the correspondence meet us at the front door!

**W**HAT would you do if one day you discovered that your wife was a thief? Several courses of action would be open to you. Which would you choose? Henry Irving Dodge, the famed author of "Skinner's Dress Suit," has written a tale around this theme for the November AINSLEE'S. Watch for it. It's different.





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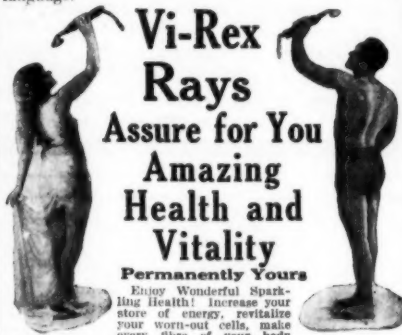
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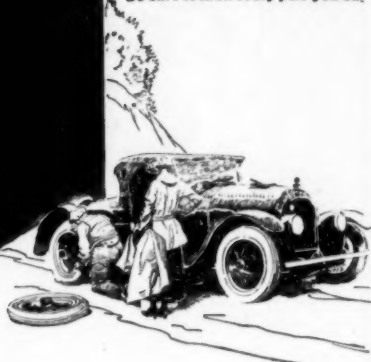
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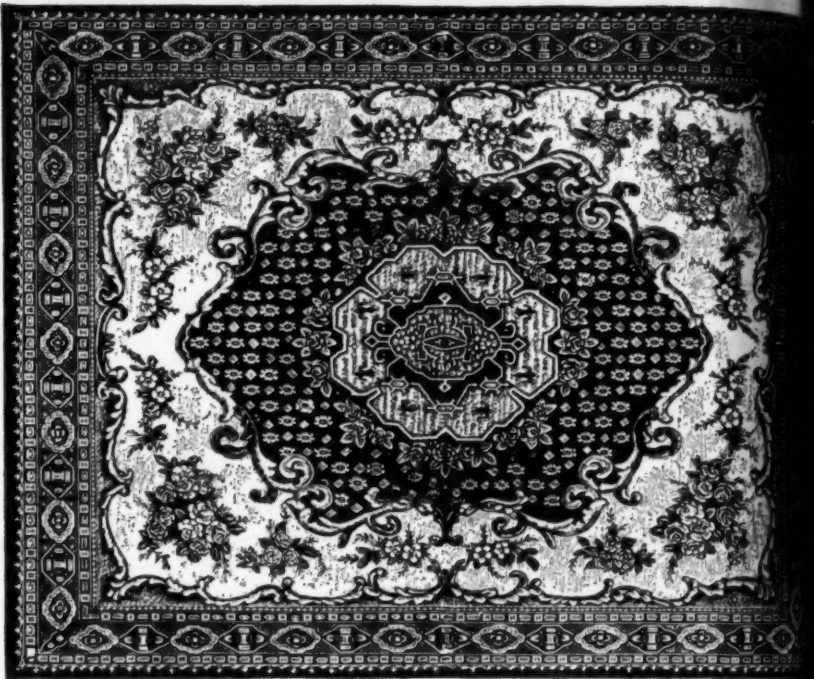
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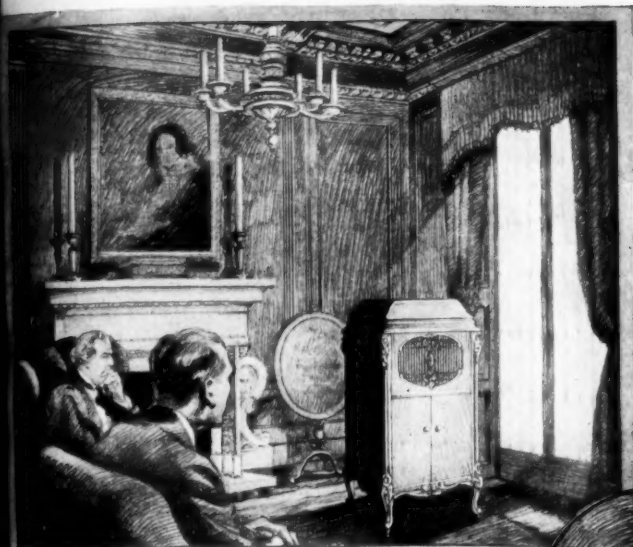
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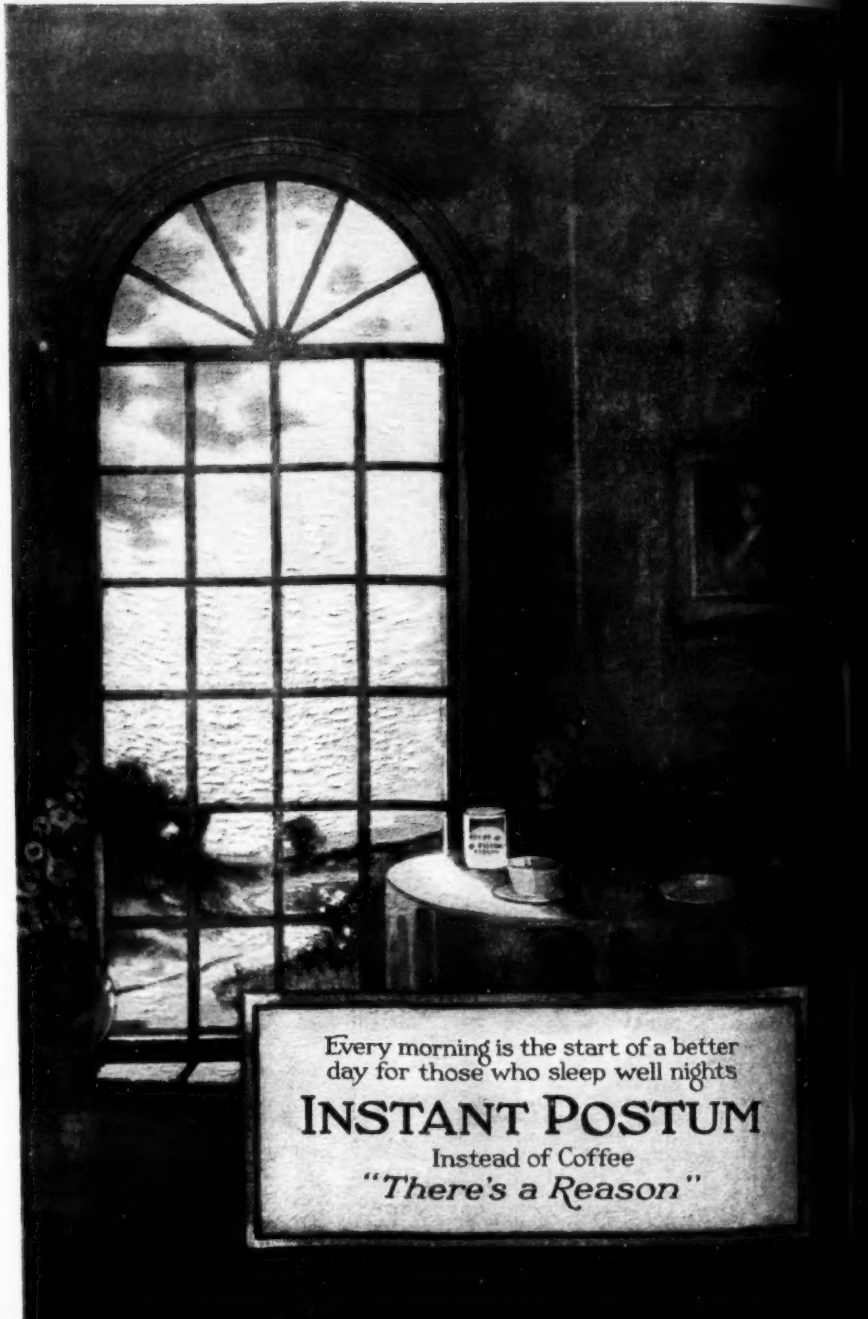
10022 *Rustle of Spring* . Godowsky

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          *Kathleen* . Theo. Karle  
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